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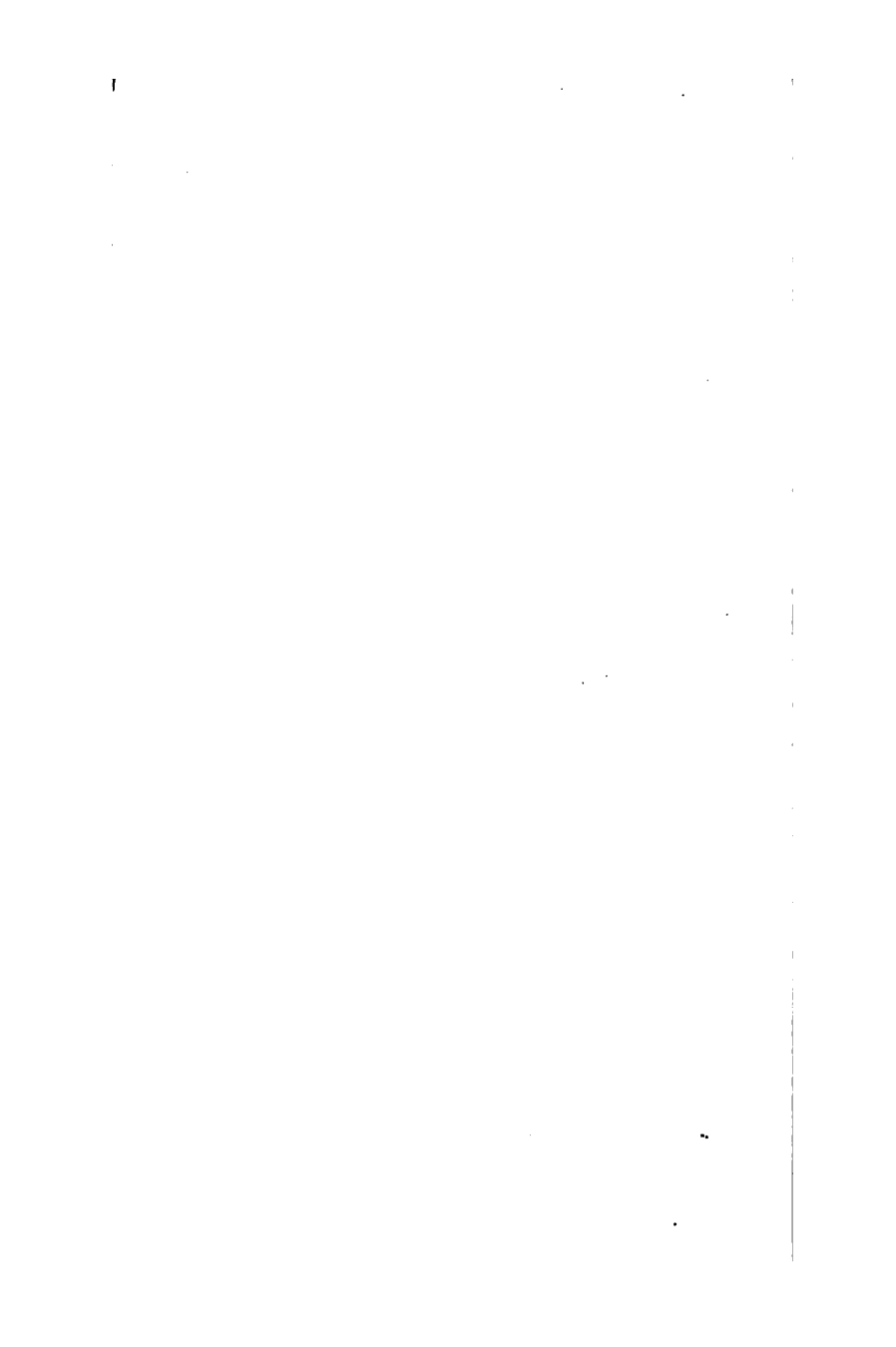


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Cockton









# STANLEY THORN.

BY

HENRY COCKTON, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

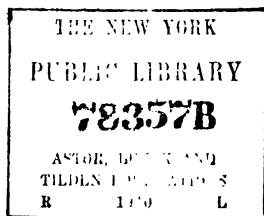
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# STANLEY THORN.

## CHAPTER I.

PORTRAITS, WITH OTHER FEATURES OF IMPORTANCE, THE EARLY CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR HERO.

To those who had not the honour of being extremely intimate with Alderman Thorn, it will be necessary to explain that he was a man of considerable wealth, derived chiefly from a series of successful speculations in hops ; that he married very early, with the immediate view of procuring the means of entering into those speculations ; that at the expiration of fifteen years from the date of his marriage certificate he was generously and formally presented with an heir, whom he caused to be baptized in the name of Stanley, in honour of an aristocratic friend of that name ; that he lived in purely aldermanic style until he arrived at the age of fifty-four, when he utterly repudiated not only all intoxicating liquors, but all animal food save that which existed invisibly in vegetables and water ; that such total change of diet at his age brought on an almost perpetual shivering, which, however, failed to induce him to forego his high resolve, but which gradually killed him ; that while some held a minute *post mortem* examination to be essential to the promotion of the science of pathology, others held it to be essential by no means, it being clear that his living had caused his death, or, in other words, that his alimentary canal had been completely frozen over ; and finally, that he was buried with appropriate pomp, without the ice being thus sacrilegiously broken.

Having performed the pleasing duty of placing these afflictive details upon record to the perfect satisfaction, it is to be hoped, even of those by whom this worthy individual was held in high esteem, it now becomes strictly proper to state, that at the period of the lamentable dissolution of the alderman, Stanley had just completed his fifteenth year, and that he had then been for five years the absolute master of the house. Every member

of the establishment feared him. No servant could remain in it three consecutive months, when he happened to be at home, with the exception of a boy, a somnambulist, whom Stanley called Bob, and who had become so attached to him, that he never appeared to be truly happy in his absence. This boy was an immense favourite with Stanley, and a fine time Bob had of it in consequence. The servants avenged Stanley's insults upon him, but not in Stanley's presence; for, albeit he assumed to himself the inalienable right of horsewhipping him daily if he pleased, if he saw any other creature touch him, or menace him even with a word, he would spring at the assailant like a tiger; and if he found it impossible to conquer alone, he would make Bob help him; and if both were unable to manage it then, they would retreat to devise a series of secret assaults, which never by any chance failed to reduce the enemy to submission. He gloried in conquering those whose physical strength was superior to his own; and, in order to qualify himself for this glory, his chief delight, when he had no immediate conquest to achieve, was to reduce Bob ostensibly to a mummy, by making him stand before him with the gloves,—of course giving Bob perfectly fair play, although he dared to retreat no more than he would have dared to sell his soul,—until Stanley himself became exhausted, which seldom, indeed, happened until Bob was nearly blind.

Bob used at first to remonstrate against being thus victimised; for really it was not very often that he could see with any pleasurable degree of distinctness, and never by any chance, when Stanley was at home, was he free from a cut lip, a swollen nose, or a black eye; but when he found all remonstrances utterly vain, he very valiantly made up his mind to do his best, and eventually became rather partial to the exercise; for it did occur, occasionally, that he broke fairly through his opponent's guard, and if he succeeded in giving him but a scratch he was content, although in such a case Stanley never dreamt of leaving off until Bob became densely deaf to time.

This was, however, by no means the extent of the penalty inflicted upon Bob: on every such occasion he was discharged. His mistress could endure to see him knocked about,—she could endure to see him pommelled, even to a jelly, with the most exemplary fortitude; but there are at all times bounds to human endurance, and hers could not go one step beyond that. She could not bear to see the sweet features of her own dear Stanley disfigured by even a scratch; and hence, whenever a scratch appeared upon his countenance, Bob, with due promptitude, had his discharge.

On no such occasion, however, did he go beyond the coach-

house. He was always reinstated within the hour. Stanley invariably insisted upon his being recalled, and, having gained his point, invariably found him in the carriage asleep.

Now it is a most extraordinary fact—a fact which, however, is not more extraordinary than solemn—that Mrs. Thorn could refuse Stanley nothing, because Stanley would never tolerate a refusal from her lips. He had what he desired, because he would have it: that reason was in all cases held to be sufficient. It is true she would endeavour to persuade him to *forego* any demand, the direct tendency of which she conceived to be pernicious; but eventually such demand, however unreasonable might be its character, was conceded, because the concession was a thing upon which he had set his soul. The worthy alderman, during the last five years of his existence, would have nothing to do with him whatever. He had very horrid suspicions! Strong efforts had been made to convince him that the beautiful boy was in reality his very image,—that he had the dear alderman's chin, the dear alderman's mouth, the dear alderman's eyes, nose, and spirit; but the alderman himself either could not or would not perceive those strong points of resemblance which were insisted upon with so much eloquence and warmth; and hence, although he never went quite so far as to wound the susceptible feelings of his lady by giving direct expression to his views on the point, he unhappily had strong suspicions!

The alderman had tried, however, with desperate zeal to obtain the mastery over Stanley; but this he had never been able to accomplish, not even for a day: the failure of every effort indeed had been signal and complete. If in a moment of anger he happened to strike him, Stanley would not only strike him again, but keep up a fierce fire of books, glasses, plates, ornaments, stones,—in short, anything which happened to be at hand. If the alderman locked him up, he would break every table, every chair, and every window in the room; and if, after a desperate struggle—and it could only be after a desperate struggle,—he succeeded in tying him down, he would remain, on being released, very quietly till tea-time, when (no matter how many friends might be present, in his view the more the merrier, because of the increased quantity of ammunition) he would deliberately take his position at the table, and pelt the worthy alderman with the cups, while explaining very gravely to those around—who, of course, were quite shocked—that the whole thing was done in self-defence; and these highly irregular proceedings he would repeat just as often as he happened to be punished. If sent away, he would immediately return; for, as he justly held that to be a species of punish-



ment, he very naturally felt it to be a duty incumbent upon him to have his revenge ; and when he did return, of course the worthy alderman knew it, for he found himself subjected at every point to annoyances of the most galling character. Sometimes he and Bob would get all the worthy alderman's boots, wigs, hats, and umbrellas, to make a bonfire in the stable ; at other times he would make Bob throw water into the bed of the worthy alderman, or establish a vast number of nettles between the sheets with surpassing ingenuity. In fact, he regarded the worthy alderman as being neither more nor less than his natural enemy.

"What on earth am I to do with him?" said that worthy person to his friend, Mr. Sharpe, just before he gave Stanley up wholly.

"Do with him!" exclaimed his friend, "do with him! Give him a sound, undeniable flogging and repeat the dose daily."

"But flogging makes him worse. He considers it an insult—he will have his revenge."

"Revenge!" cried Mr. Sharpe, very contemptuously, "revenge! A lad like that talk of revenge! If I had him, I'd cut him to the very backbone!" And Mr. Sharpe looked particularly fierce, and shook his head with an air of inflexible determination, as he added, "Do you think I'd be mastered by a young wretch like that?"

"My dear friend," rejoined the alderman, "depend upon this that he is not to be tamed in that way. I have tried it, my friend, I have tried it till I'm sick."

"Well, why don't you send him to school? Why don't you place him under some severe master, who will undertake to bring him to his senses?"

"I have done so. Twenty severe masters have undertaken the task, and what has been the consequence? Why, the moment they have commenced their severity, he has pelted them with ink-stands, and started."

"Of course you have not taken him back on those occasions?"

"In several instances I have ; but, God bless your soul, it was of no use! Some refused to receive him again ; while those who consented to give him another trial were never able to keep him above a day."

"I only wish that I had the management of him, that's all."

"I wish you had with all my soul!" exclaimed the alderman, with unexampled fervour. "Your bitterest enemy, my friend, could wish no worse."

"I'd tame him!" rejoined Mr. Sharpe ; "I'd exorcise the little rampant devil that's within him!"

"But how would you go to work?—how would you act? What on earth would you do with him?"

"What would I do with him! Will he not listen to reason?"

"To be sure he will; that's the worst of it. He'll sit down and argue the point with you for hours; he'll tell you candidly, that if you insult him, he feels himself bound to avenge the insult; that his honour—his honour, my friend! prompts him to retaliate; that he is prepared at any time to sign a treaty of peace, to the effect that if you cease to annoy him, he will cease to annoy you; and that in the event of such treaty being violated, of course he and you are again at open war."

"He is rather a queer customer to deal with," observed Mr. Sharpe.

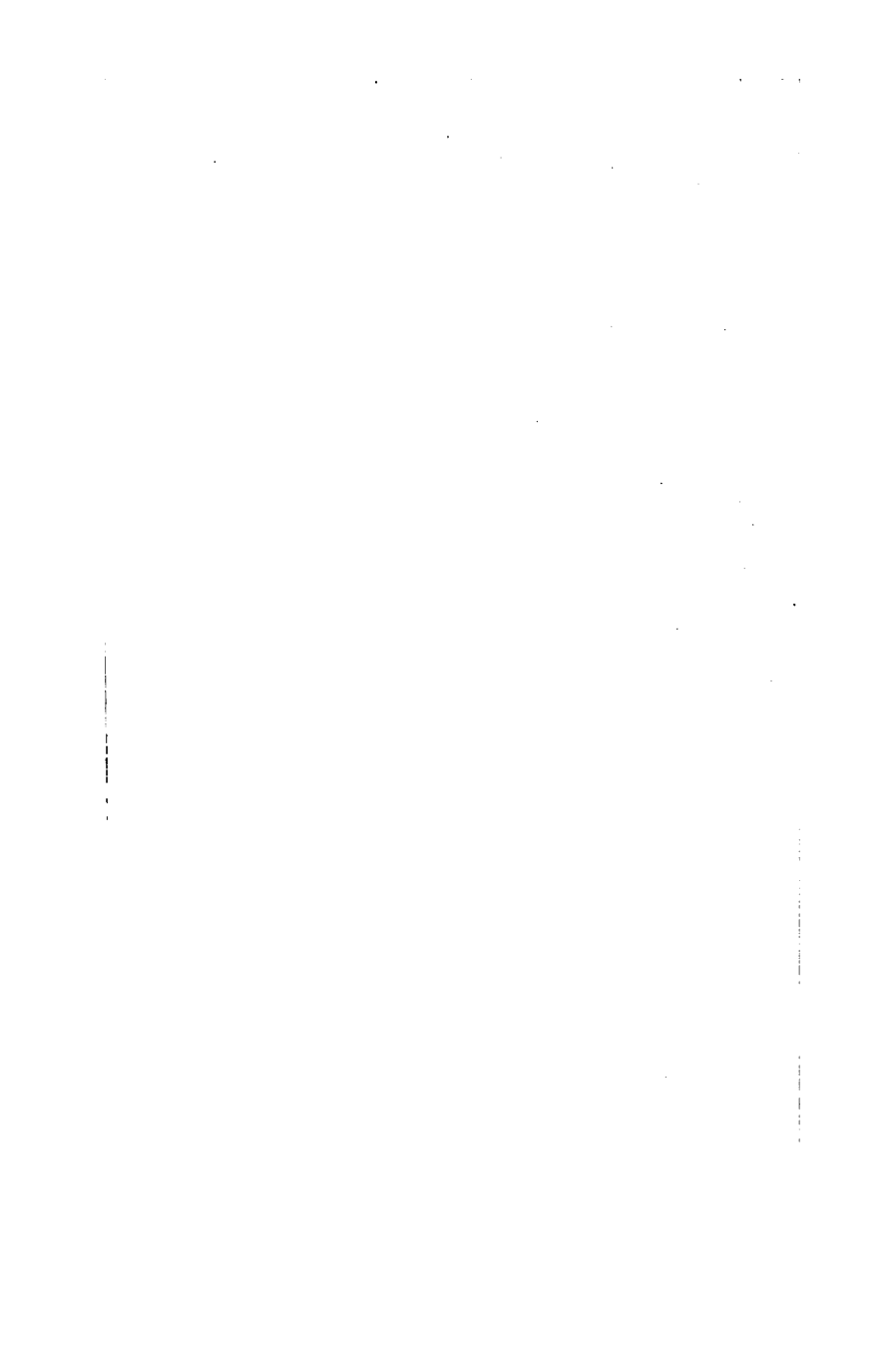
"He is a queer customer. You'd be very apt to think so if you did but know all."

"And yet," said Mr. Sharpe, after a pause, during which he had looked very mysterious, "I'd be bound still to tame him. Why, if he were a boy of mine!"—Mr. Sharpe said no more, but he shook his head with unspeakable significance, and took a very deep inspiration through his teeth.

"Well, my friend, well"—urged the alderman, who wished him to proceed—"and if he *were* your son, what would you do with him?"

"Do! I'd do something with him. I'd teach him the difference! Do you think that he should ever get the upper hand of me?"

"But how would you manage it?—that's the great point. I'll just explain to you the way in which he acted last week. On Monday I simply said to him while at dinner, that he ought to be ashamed of his conduct, when he seized the tureen, and sent the whole of the soup over me in an instant. I chastised him,—of course I chastised him—and he upset the table. I rushed at him again; but having kept me at bay for some considerable time with the fragments of the dishes, he darted from the room. That night I found a number of nettles in my bed, and, on jumping out in agony, I discovered that my bed-room had scarcely a single pane of glass in it; and in the morning I had neither a boot nor a hat to put on. I got hold of him by stratagem, and shook him with just violence, and what do you think he did? Why he instantly went into the pantry, got a basketful of eggs, and popped them at me, until really I was in such a state! I ran after him; but, no!—he kept up the fire, carrying his basket of ammunition upon his arm. Well, I caught him again in the course of the day, and locked him up in the cellar, and there he set to work, and I do not know how many bottles of wine he broke. I heard the crash, and went





the most distinguished men of the age ; that none but Etonians were esteemed perfect men of the world, and that it was in fact far more famous for that than for absolute learning, he eventually resolved upon going to Eton expressly in order to gain caste.

When this highly laudable resolution had been delicately communicated to the widow, she was delighted. She saw at once in Stanley a great man in embryo ; and when she had been advised of the assumed fact that almost all the most distinguished men of the day were Etonians, she, of course, looked upon it as abundantly clear that all Etonians became distinguished men. This corollary was, in her judgment, really so natural and correct that, had five thousand pounds been required for the start, she would have given that sum with unspeakable pleasure. Her Stanley—her own Stanley, was about to become an Etonian ! She did not pretend to understand much about it, but she nevertheless conceived, from his description, that to be an Etonian would at once enable Stanley to associate with the sons of the most distinguished.

Stanley himself had, however, still some misgivings on the subject. It was true he had read Virgil, and a trifle of Livy ; he could, moreover, versify—a little ; but he could not expect to be placed above the fourth form. He had heard of fagging ; he had also heard of flogging ; and he knew that if they attempted to fag or to flog him !—No matter—it was settled : he had made up his mind to go, and go he would, if it were only to enable him to say that he had been.

Accordingly, everything which could be deemed essential was prepared, and the preliminaries necessary to enable him to commence at the ensuing half, having been most politely arranged by Mr. Seymour, the father of one of Stanley's most gentlemanlike associates, he started with a purse sufficiently heavy, but with a heart not perhaps quite sufficiently light.

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## CHAPTER II.

### STANLEY AT ETON.

THE first person to whom Stanley was introduced on his arrival was Alfred Julian, whose friends were on terms of close intimacy with the Seymours. Alfred, who was a fine high-toned boy—precisely the sort of fellow to meet Stanley's views—undertook to initiate him into all the deep mysteries of the school ; but he was, most unfortunately, himself in the fourth form, and hence could not, by having his friend for a fag

nominally, save him from the tyranny of the fifth and the sixth. He therefore explained to him at once, that he really must make up his mind to become a fag, seeing that all, no matter how high might be the position of their families, were compelled to submit to it, and that it was held to be by no means humiliating or degrading, but in reality a stimulus to exertion, inasmuch as those who took the right view of the matter strove, in consequence, to work their way up as soon as possible.

"All social distinctions here," added Julian, "are in this respect levelled: for example, Joliffe, Villiers, Cleveland, Cholmondeley, and Howard,—to whom I shall introduce you, for they are all at our Dame's—are the fags of Frogmorton, although he is a plebeian, while they are connected with the first families in the kingdom. We must not, therefore, feel ourselves degraded when called upon to act like them."

"Well I shall see," returned Stanley. "I'll do as the rest do, if possible."

He and Julian accordingly proceeded to Dame Johnson's where they met with about twenty light-hearted, merry fellows.

He had not, however, been here more than an hour when he was assailed by the older boys by a number of interrogatories which he held to be particularly impertinent. By Dashall especially was he thus persecuted, for Dashall was one of those who, panting to show off their power and importance, made the most of the three days before the arrival of the strapping fellows of the fifth and sixth forms. Stanley did not by any means approve of this practice, and therefore answered rather pettishly, which had the effect of making them persevere the more, for, although they saw something in his general tone and manner, which in a slight degree checked them, they held the process of teasing a new boy to be a right prescriptive and inviolable.

"My good fellow," said Stanley, addressing Dashall, who would not give in, "don't annoy me. I am anxious to make friends of all, and have therefore no desire to quarrel with you."

"What! quarrel with me!" exclaimed the highly-indignant Dashall, with an air of astonishment the most intense. "No desire to quarrel with *me*! Come, I like that: it's cool—very cool for a new one. Perhaps you would like to take it out, old fellow? Do you fancy yourself at all with the gloves?"

Stanley eyed him with an expression of contempt, although he made no reply; but that terror of the juniors—the mighty

Dashall—in a state of extreme ignorance of the chamber-practice Stanley had had with Bob, distinctly intimated to him, and that in terms the most powerful at his command, that if he would only wait until he had pulled on his boots, he would instantly accommodate him with a turn.

Stanley smiled; but Dashall, whose blood was up, looked very fierce, and gave his opponent such occasional glances as he fancied might wither him, while the juniors, whom the invincible Dashall had awed, really looked with an eye of pity upon Stanley, not, however, unmixed with astonishment at his apparently imperturbable calmness.

"Now, my fine fellow!" cried Dashall, having drawn on his boots. "If I take a little bit of the bounce out of you, it will do you precisely as much good as physic."

Some of the juniors laughed at the sparkling wit of Dashall, while others advised Stanley to have nothing to do with him, he was such a desperate hitter; but Stanley, of course, remained unmoved, and Julian, who was anxious to ascertain what his new friend was made of, did by no means endeavour to dissuade him from accepting the challenge.

"Now then! are you afraid?" cried the imperious Dashall, —for really that desperate young gentleman had become very impatient; and he opened his shoulders and struck at the air, and ascertained the precise firmness of his muscles; but Stanley, who was in no sort of haste, made certain inquiries having reference to the character of his opponent, in order to learn what amount of punishment he should be justified in inflicting.

Julian could not but admire Stanley's coolness; and having inferred hence that there must be some sterling stuff in him, he became nearly as eager for the fray as the fiery Dashall himself. Well, the gloves were produced, and Stanley rose. He buttoned his coat simply; but Dashall, bent upon doing some tremendous execution, stripped in an instant, and drew on the gloves.

"Now," said Stanley, "I have no wish to hurt you; but if you persist in having a turn, you'll have yourself alone to blame."

"You don't wish to hurt me!" cried Dashall. "Good again! Well, I wish I may live! What next? You don't wish to hurt me!" he repeated, for really he was very much amused, and he laughed very loudly, and the juniors joined him very merrily.

"Well, come, go to work!" said Julian at length. "You are both sure to win. *Possunt quia posse videntur.*"

In this particular instance, however, the combatants respec-

tively held Virgil to be wrong; and to prove that he was wrong they immediately commenced, Dashall striking one of the most imposing attitudes of which he was capable, while Stanley simply held up his guard.

Dashall, even at the commencement, did not much admire the unflinching firmness of Stanley's eye. He notwithstanding felt quite certain to beat him, and sprang about, and feinted, and performed a great variety of extraordinary antics, displaying at each spring his agility and science to an extent altogether remarkable. On the other hand, Stanley kept quiet; he felt that by far the best course he could pursue—the course calculated to save him a world of trouble in future, was that of allowing the great Dashall to tire himself first, and then to honour him with a few of his straightforward favours, with the view of convincing him firmly of his error. He therefore stood for some considerable time on the defensive, while Dashall was twisting and turning, and torturing himself into all sorts of attitudes, marvelling greatly that every well-meant blow of his should be so coolly stopped.

"Come—come! you don't appear to be doing *much*!" observed Stanley, when Dashall, by dint of striking out with desperation, had become nearly exhausted. "I think that it is now my turn to begin," and he gave him a gentle tap over his guard. These taps were always given upon the bridge of the nose; and as even Bob never liked them much, it will be extremely reasonable to infer that the great Dashall did not approve of them at all. Stanley, nevertheless, tapped him again and again, in a manner so calm that the great man really became a little confused. He could not get even a blow at his opponent, who kept constantly tapping, and tapping, and tapping, until the terror of the fourth absolutely became so enraged that he scarcely knew what to be at. He singularly enough began to feel that he had made a slight mistake in his man. He could do nothing with him. He tried a rush. Stanley stepped aside, and tapped him as he passed. He tried caution again; and again Stanley tapped him. This enraged him far more than a corresponding number of straightforward blows would have done, and he expressed himself precisely to that effect.

"Why don't you strike out?" he exclaimed, with peculiar indignation, "and not keep on tapping and tapping like that!"

"As you please," returned Stanley, who did on the instant strike out, and poor Dashall went down as if he really had been shot.

The great man did not like even this. He looked as if it were a thing of which ~~he~~ *he* could not approve—which was very



extraordinary, seeing that it was precisely what he had just before solicited,—and, while some of the juniors cheered very loudly, others looked very steadily at Stanley, as if lost in admiration of his prowess.

Dashall, however, stood up again, and Stanley calmly put to him whether he really liked that practice better than the other, but as he replied with a well-intentioned lunge of desperation, Stanley stopped him, and down he went again.

Another cheer burst from the juniors, and Dashall looked at them with an I'll-serve-you-out-when-I-catch-you-alone sort of scowl, which was in the abstract, no doubt, truly awful. He, however, by no means gave in. Stanley urged him to do so; but, no! he wanted only to give one fair hit to be happy. He therefore guarded himself with additional caution, and Stanley, notwithstanding, with additional rapidity kept tapping him precisely upon the bridge of his nose.

This he held to be about the most extraordinary thing in nature. He could not at all understand it. It mattered not a straw how imposing might be his attitude, how excellent his guard, how fiery his eye, or how fierce his general aspect, Stanley still kept on tapping and tapping, while *he* could do nothing whatever in return, although he plunged, and bucked, and bored, and jumped about in the most remarkable manner possible, and with a facility which was really very admirable in itself.

The interest now became intense. It was perceived that the great man had screwed up his courage to a most ferocious pitch, although Stanley stood as calmly as ever. Dashall made a furious rush, and Stanley stopped him. This made him stand still for a moment, and look very wild, but on he rushed again. Stanley stopped again with his right, and with his left sent him down as before.

This seemed to inspire him with the conviction that he had made a mistake altogether. He felt much confused, and looked very much annoyed, for it appeared to have struck him—which was really very singular,—that he had had enough as nearly as possible, which Stanley no sooner perceived than he drew off his gloves, and offered Dashall his hand, which at that moment happened to be precisely the very thing he was most anxious to take.

“Well done!” he exclaimed with a patronising air, which was indeed very good of him. “Come, you are not a bad sort, after all! This is just what I call, you know, a friendly set-to. You must be one of us after this!” And the great man shook Stanley by the hand with extreme cordiality, and laboured very desperately and very laudably to conceal his confusion

from those around, the whole of whom most uncharitably and unamiably rejoiced at his defeat, for his overbearing conduct, towards the smaller boys especially, had been intolerable.

"Now, then," said Julian, "come to Joliffe's den. We have dubbed for a feed, and are going to be jolly together."

With this proposal Stanley was rather pleased; he therefore agreed to it at once, and went with Julian to the particular den in question, where he was hailed with three cheers as "a miller of the first water," by a dozen of the *élite*, who had already established themselves in a room, with the view, apparently, of proving how small is that space in which a dozen individuals can eat and be happy.

Our hero, who now began to feel himself at home, surveyed this banquetting-hall with great minuteness. It was about eight feet by six, yet did it contain twelve mortals, a nice assortment of candle-ends, a leaden inkstand, a table, a sofa, a lot of books, and sundry hampers. The ancient walls were emblazoned with highly-coloured portraits of *prima donnas*, pretty barmaids, and theatrical warriors of every clime, while the spaces between them were appropriately embellished with elaborate drawings in pencil and chalk, of ships, monuments, and barns, with a few highly-finished artistical profiles of those masters and preceptors who had rendered themselves obnoxious, and who really seemed to have the largest noses in nature.

On the whole it will hence be inferred that this den looked particularly tidy; but that which at first puzzled Stanley more than all was the style in which his friends were addressed. Each appeared to have a *sobriquet* peculiar to himself, with which Stanley became acquainted on being informed, not merely in general terms, that all had subscribed to the feast, but that Bull's-eye, for example, had contributed a German sausage; the Nigger, a wild-duck; Hokee Pokee, a pigeon-pie; Macbeth, an extraordinary lot of gingerbread; Twankay, a lump of Stilton cheese; the Black Prince, a variety of raspberry-tarts; Boggles, a Lilliputian ham; and Robin Hood, a Brobdignagian plumcake; while the worthy host, Caliban, himself, had not only contributed a pheasant, but had secured two tankards of regulation ale.

Of the whole of these delicacies each guest partook indiscriminately, freely, and with infinite gusto. The gingerbread, for instance, relished well with the German sausage; the raspberry-tarts with the ham; the Stilton cheese with the pigeon-pie; the plumcake with the pheasant. In fact, taken together, they formed so remarkable a relish, that it seemed to be a pity

almost that the whole of them had not been mixed with the ale in a bucket before they began.

Stanley had never seen a knot of fellows eat so fiercely; but their enjoyment was amazingly pure; and when they had stuffed themselves to their hearts' content, they kept up a perpetual rattle, in the gibberish peculiar to the school, having reference chiefly to their wonderful exploits during the vacation, until bed-time, when they wisely retired to their respective cribs in the merriest possible mood.

During the two succeeding days the little tyrants of the Dashall caste reigned supreme over all but Stanley; but when the fifth and sixth began to arrive, they gradually sunk into the most minute insignificance. The new boys wondered and walked about very mysteriously on witnessing the arrival of these tall fellows in their pea-jackets, wrappers, and cloaks, and retired for the night with about the same feelings as those which may reasonably be supposed to be entertained by convicts on their arrival in Van Dieman's Land, as they speculate profoundly upon the character of the men to whom tyrannous Fate has consigned them. Stanley was, however, an exception to the rule: he had no such feelings to depress him; he was, on the contrary, pleased with the appearance of new arrivals, and fancied that he might study their style and general bearing with great advantage. On the following morning he therefore set to work with the laudable view of qualifying himself for the Remove as soon as possible; but he had scarcely been working an hour when, much to his astonishment, he was aroused by a desperate kick at his door, which served as a prelude to the following command: "I say, you new fellow, go to Fitzallan's study; he wants you."

Stanley certainly conceived this to be rather unceremonious; but he, notwithstanding, went to that particular study, and knocked.

"Come in!" cried Fitzallan, in an authoritative tone.

Stanley entered, and found himself in the presence of three tall fellows, one of whom on the instant observed that he was a strapper, when Fitzallan gave it as his unbought opinion that he would do, and without further ceremony told him to sit down.

To affirm that Stanley held this reception to be highly flattering were to affirm that which is by no means strictly true. He did not; but he sat down, and waited with exemplary patience until some important matters then on hand had been arranged, when Fitzallan, addressing him again, said,

"Well, young fellow, what can you do?"

Stanley looked as if anxious for some slight explanation, when Fitzallan continued, "Can you brush toga, clean candle-sticks well, and light fires?"

"Upon my word," replied Stanley, with a smile, "I cannot pretend to those delicate accomplishments. I really have not had much experience in such matters."

"I did not suppose that you had. But take the mud off that pea-jacket. Come, let us see what you are made of."

Stanley looked at the pea-jacket, and looked at Fitzallan, and then looked at Fitzallan's friends, but did not attempt to obey orders.

"Do you hear?" cried Fitzallan, with a scowl.

"I do," replied Stanley; "but as I think that you are equally competent to the task, I'll leave you to do it." He thereupon rose and having opened the door, was just on the point of departing, when Fitzallan, starting up, caught him by the ear.

At that moment Stanley did not smile—no, not even slightly; yet (and really it is a most extraordinary thing to place upon record) there was something in his look which had the effect of inducing Fitzallan to relinquish his hold. "I will not," said Stanley firmly, "notice this. I am willing to look over it; but if you dare again to *touch* me, I'll strike you to the ground!" And having delivered himself precisely to this effect, he walked calmly from the room, leaving Fitzallan and his friends in a state of amazement.

A short time after this Julian went to him. "Really, Thorn," said he, "you have done wrong. I spoke to Fitzallan myself; he is one of the most gentlemanly fellows in the school; and if you had consented to become his fag nominally, he would have treated you, for my sake, as a companion."

"Why," cried Stanley, "he commanded me to brush the mud off his pea-jacket!"

"Well, and what if he did?" rejoined Julian, soothingly. "It was simply because there were two of the Sixth with him."

"I'd not do it for any one on earth!" cried Stanley. "I'd die first!"

"But see what a position you place yourself in. If you'll not fag, you throw down the gauntlet. The fifth and sixth are sure to be at you."

"I don't care. I'll do my best to beat them; but even should I fail, I'll not fag."

"Well, but just let me reason with you a little on this matter. If even you are able to beat them all, they are certain to make a dead set at you, and what will be the consequence? Can you stand flogging?"

"No," replied Stanley, "decidedly not."

"Then I'd strongly recommend you not to get out of bounds. If you do, the præposters are certain to catch you; in which case, of course, you'll be put in the bill."

"And if I will not be flogged," rejoined Stanley, "what then?"

"Why, in that case you'll be with due ceremony expelled. But I am sorry you should have quarrelled with Fitzallan, for he is really a good-hearted fellow. Come, let me go and tell him you didn't understand it?"

"By no means," said Stanley; "I can perform such humiliating offices for no one."

Julian now plainly perceived that Stanley was not destined to remain long at Eton. He therefore gave him the best advice under the circumstances, strongly recommending him to keep within bounds; a course to which Stanley, knowing what would follow, most firmly resolved to adhere.

Fitzallan, whose object in sending for Stanley was to serve him, and thus to oblige Julian, from whose family he had received many very kind attentions, took no farther notice of the matter; but Scott and Hampden, who were with him at the time, marked Stanley, and closely watched him, in the lively expectation of catching him out of bounds. In this they were, however, disappointed. Nothing could tempt him to go a step beyond, knowing perfectly well what would be the result.

Now it happened a short time after this affair that Joliffe, one of his most intimate companions, was flogged. The cause was very trifling, and the effect was not very severe; but, independently of the extreme indelicacy of the process,—and it really is very indelicate,—the degradation struck Stanley with so much force, that he at once resolved to manifest his abhorrence of this vile and disgusting species of punishment in a way which could not be mistaken.

He accordingly conferred with his companions on the subject; and as they were equally anxious for the abolition of that species of punishment, contending very naturally, and very properly, that it ought at any rate to be confined to mere children, it was eventually resolved that they should get up a show of rebellion, than which at that period nothing could be more easy.

Stanley was chosen their leader, and they certainly could not have elected a more experienced hand. He set to work as usual at once, and in earnest. Having purchased an owl, which bore some resemblance to the then Lord Chief Justice, a dozen lively sparrows, and an infinite variety of fulminating balls, it was arranged that he himself should take the manage-

ment of his interesting ornithological curiosity; that Joliffe, Fox, and Villiers, should each have the command of four sparrows; and that to Howard and Cholmondeley should be entrusted the distribution of the fulminating balls. A certain evening was fixed upon for the commencement of the rebellion, and they took especial care that their plumed troop should go to work as hungry as possible.

Well, the evening came, and the conspirators at the usual hour marched into school. There stood the revered doctor with all the gravity at his command, while the various masters respectively sported a corresponding aspect of solemnity. The signal was given; a buzzing was heard—a buzzing to which the whole school had long been accustomed, the process being known as that of “booing the master.”

“Silence!” cried the doctor, who really seemed to anticipate a storm; but the buzzing continued, and gradually increased until indeed it appeared to be absolutely universal.

“I’ll flog the first boy I discover,” said the doctor, who held it, by virtue of some strange and inscrutable perversion of judgment, to be disgraceful.

The buzzing, however, continued to increase; and it may be stated, as a remarkable fact, that although the lynx-eyed doctor looked in every direction with unexampled intensity and minuteness, not one of the rebels was he able to detect; and what made it, under the circumstances, still more remarkable was, that they all seemed at that particular period to be studying with unprecedented zeal.

“Silence!” again shouted the Doctor. “I’ll punish the whole school!” And he really did feel very angry at that moment; and just as he was solemnly promulgating something having reference to the highly unpopular process of taking away their holidays, which seemed to be generally understood and appreciated, Stanley, with all due gravity, drew the Lord Chief Justice from his pocket, and having given him an impetus in the perfect similitude of a pinch of the tail, allowed his lordship at once to take wing.

Away flew the Lord Chief Justice very naturally straight for the chandelier, which was a fine large round one, in which between thirty and forty candles were burning brightly. Whizz! he went right in amongst them, knocking down a dozen at the very first pass, he then turned and charged the rest, and down went a dozen more, again he turned and went at them—and again. In short his lordship seemed to feel himself bound to work away until he had knocked down the lot, and left the school in total darkness; for he scorned to give in until he had performed what he evidently conceived

to be his duty, by achieving that object for which his introduction had been designed.

The school was now in an uproar; the laughter on every side was tremendous. The chief conspirators started three ear-piercing cheers, which were echoed by the rebels in the aggregate with consummate shrillness and effect, while Howard and Cholmondeley were busily engaged in strewing the fulminating balls about the gangway.

The school was dark as pitch, and the rebels seemed to entertain an idea that the doctor was not very highly delighted; but that which tended more than all to confirm this impression was the heart-rending tone in which he called for more candles. The rebels in general, however, held it to be glorious sport, and kept it up zealously, loudly, and boldly, until the fresh lights were produced.

They could now see the doctor—they could see that he did not appreciate the fun—which was very extraordinary. They could not, however, be mistaken in this; for, instead of his being convulsed with merriment, he absolutely expressed what he felt very warmly, and gave each opinion with infinite point.

The præposters were now directed to station themselves in various parts of the school, with the view of taking observations; but during their progress they walked, as a matter of course, upon the fulminating balls, which went bang! bang! bang! at every step.

The doctor did not—he really *could* not—approve of these proceedings. On the contrary, he conceived them to be highly irregular, and very monstrous; and by the time he had delivered a few appropriate observations immediately bearing upon the point, the fresh lights were established,—not again in the chandelier, but in various parts of the school. The instant this grand desideratum had been accomplished, Fox, Villiers, and Joliffe, with surpassing dexterity, drew forth their sparrows, which in the common course of nature made at once for the lights, and never left them until they had extinguished them all.

The whole school was again in an uproar—the sport was held to be prime! The præposters, who had for the few preceding minutes been standing quite still, now began again to move, and the fulminating balls again went bang! bang!

More lights were demanded by the doctor; for being a man who was not a profound scholar merely, but one who looked at things in general with a learned spirit of human dealings, he wisely imagined that the ammunition of the rebels had been expended, which, as far as matters had proceeded, was

extremely correct. But the Lord Chief Justice, who, in doing so much execution, had undergone a temporary derangement of his faculties, had by this time recovered his power of observation, and hence no sooner did he observe the fresh lights introduced, than he felt it his duty to fly at them before they reached the places for which they had been destined. He did so, and so effectually did he perform that duty, that in the space of three minutes the whole school was in darkness again.

The doctor said something extremely severe, and his observations absolutely seemed to have reference to the subject; for, although he was indistinctly heard, he on the instant retired—of course in the dark.

Now the prepostors knew nothing of this conspiracy against the doctor's peace; but Scott and Hampden fixed, nevertheless, their suspicions at once upon Stanley. They knew that he had a number of satellites; they knew that those satellites were spirited daring young dogs, who would by no means object to enter into such a conspiracy; and they moreover knew, that if they could only bring it clearly home to him, they should have the extreme gratification of proving whether he would in reality suffer expulsion in preference to being flogged.

With infinite zeal they therefore set to work, and eventually, by virtue of specious manœuvring, obtained a slight clue to the delinquency of Stanley, Fox, Villiers, and Howard. Even this was, however, deemed sufficient. Their suspicions were communicated to the doctor, and the day following that on which this communication was made the doctor solemnly directed the delinquents to stand forth.

They stood forth accordingly, and the doctor, in the first place, distinctly explained to them the nature of the charge; he then went on to illustrate the enormity of the offence; and having, in the third place, stated the penalty prescribed, he with all due solemnity observed, that as he had no absolute proof of their guilt, he should be perfectly satisfied that they were innocent if they would then declare that they were so, upon their honour as Etonians.

Of course Stanley would not do this, nor would Villiers, nor would Fox, nor would Howard. They were silent. The question was again put;—they made no reply. The doctor was therefore convinced that they were guilty.

Now came the test. The suspense was profound. The doctor held a grave conference with the rest of the masters, of whom one distinctly intimated that, as it was their first offence, they ought to be flogged, not expelled; and as this appeared to be the general feeling amongst them, the doctor very pointedly pu



it to the chief delinquent whether he would consent to be flogged.

"No," replied Stanley, "decidedly not. It was to mark our sense of the indelicate character of that species of punishment that we acted as we did."

The doctor looked with great earnestness at Stanley, and then turned and looked earnestly at his colleagues, who looked in return very earnestly at him. Without the slightest comment, however, on the nature of this answer, the same question was put to the others, who made, word for word, the same reply.

"Then," said the doctor, "I have but one course to pursue;" and, in tones the most solemn and impressive, he added, "I hereby publicly expel you from this school, and entail upon you all the consequences thereof."

The same day Stanley, Fox, Villiers, and Howard, in a post-chaise, left Eton together.

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### CHAPTER III.

SHOWS PRECISELY HOW PERSONS CAN BE PLACED IN A PECULIAR POSITION.

It is probably one of the most striking truths in nature, that we are never inspired with a due appreciation of that which we have. We must lose it—no matter what it be, health, wealth, or any other acknowledged sublunary blessing—before our estimate of its value can be correct. Neither wives, husbands, parents, nor friends are duly estimated until they are gone. While we possess them, our process of valuation partakes of the character of that of the Israelites when about to purchase garments: we look with great minuteness at the defects, without a scruple, should it answer our immediate purpose to make them appear to be greater than they are; but when we lose them, their failings we magnify not, but on the contrary look at their virtues, and find those failings completely eclipsed.

Now, as this most remarkable truth is of universal application, it may not be deemed extraordinary that it should have applied to the amiable relict of Alderman Thorn. While the alderman was living, he was not precisely all that that lady desired; he was nothing—very frequently, indeed, was he nothing—at all like what she desired. She would sigh, she would be sorry,—she would wish that if he were but—then she would think!—But oh! how awful it is to dive into the thoughts—the occasional secret thoughts—of those who un-

happily conceive that they are too tightly bound by matrimony's soft silken cords, of which the gloos, like that of prematurely old bell-ropes, an indulgence in anger and an abuse of authority, not fair wear and tear, have worn off. We should there in the highest perfection behold the extreme wickedness of that which is termed the human heart,—we should there discover wishes and conceptions of a character so startling and so vile, that even they who have cherished those wishes and conceptions endeavour to conceal them from themselves.

Without, therefore, going more minutely into the previous thoughts of the widow Thorn, who most certainly never wished them to be publicly known, it may perhaps be sufficient to state, that although she had treated the worthy alderman not fondly;—although the practical illustrations of domestic felicity she had induced were particularly hot,—although, in short, she was continually at him, pointing out dreadful faults, which he never could perceive, she began now to think that, after all, he was really a kind-hearted, generous, good, dear sort of soul, and hence became absolutely inconsolable.

She wept : very frequently she wept—and more especially on her pillow—and sighed, and wept again, and sometimes sobbed, and reproached herself bitterly for having previously inspected the faults only of him whose virtues were in the ascendant. She had not felt it nearly so much when Stanley went to Eton ; but he had no sooner left her than she began to feel very acutely the lamentable loneliness of her position. She was very wretched, and very disconsolate, and what, in her judgment, was far worse than all, albeit she had been no less than fifteen months a widow, not one of the late worthy alderman's friends had proposed to convince her that the loss she had sustained was not absolutely irreparable ! She gave dinners : she dressed with extreme elegance : she did all that she could with prudence to inspire those whom she conceived to be likely to propose with due courage. No ! they were polite ; they never refused an invitation ; they were at all times particularly attentive and agreeable—but nothing more. She thought it strange—very strange ; she really could not in any way account for it. She was rich, and she was tall : she felt that she was interesting, if not strictly handsome : yet not a single creature would propose !

Such being the state of things then, she began very deliberately and very seriously to turn the matter over in her mind ; for although she had a son—a dear darling son,—who was doubtless, a very great comfort in his way,—she really felt that the comfort of a son, however great it might be, was not

comparable, under the existing circumstances, with that of a husband—which was really very natural, and hence very correct.

Now, within the brilliant circle of her acquaintance, there was a highly-respectable individual named Ripstone, whom Stanley from his infancy had been accustomed to call his Pippin. This gentleman held a deeply-responsible situation in the Treasury, and had moreover been a schoolfellow of the late worthy alderman, who had ever received and esteemed him as a friend. He had never been married. He had, therefore, no practical knowledge of the blessings with which matrimony teems; and it may be added as an extraordinary fact, that he had never developed the slightest inclination to become conversant with that particular branch of human knowledge; which certainly does not precisely accord with the popular view of social excellence. Mr. Ripstone was, notwithstanding, a very amiable man; and although he was not very rich, he had an annual salary of four hundred pounds, and with all the generosity in nature, spent each quarter's pay in advance.

To this gentleman the widow had given great encouragement; for, independently of his being a respectable-looking man—though rather short for his circumference, which was not inconsiderable,—he was a nice, kind, quiet, clever, excellent creature, who *would* offend no one, and whom, moreover, no one could offend. He had been at every one of the widow's parties; he had never by any chance begged to be excused; he had always arrived with the strict punctuality of the sun, and had invariably made himself very agreeable. Nor had his visits been confined to those occasions. By no means. He frequently dined with her alone! She gave him *every* opportunity to declare himself; spoke warmly, and eloquently, on the subject of wedded life; marvelled greatly that *he* should have no thought whatever of entering into the blissful marriage state; explained the utterly disconsolate character of her own position, and proved to demonstration that, with all her wealth, she could not, in her extreme loneliness, be happy! But, no! It was all of no use. He was still as insensible as a block of Scotch granite.

There would the poor widow sit, sighing, glancing, and fidgeting about, until she really became so provoked that she scarcely knew what on earth to do with herself, while he would be twiddling his thumbs, or mechanically twirling his watch-chain, with a heart as dead to every sigh, look, smile, and sentiment of affection as a stone. It was monstrous! The widow at times had no patience with the man. She herself felt it strongly and deeply to be monstrous; and that natural feeling

at length prompted her boldly and resolutely to arrive at the conclusion that it would not do at all to go on any longer so. She held it to be a pity—a thousand pities—that Ripstone should be so excessively timid; but as she had done all in her power to inspire him with due courage, and as every effort had signally failed, she resolved, with surpassing firmness, to take one grand step, which, if it did nothing else, would at least put an end to that cruel suspense with which she was then so constantly tortured.

Accordingly, on the morning of the very day on which Stanley left Eton, she forwarded a special invitation to Mr. Ripstone to dine with her alone, at the same time intimating clearly that she was anxious to have the benefit of his advice upon a subject in which the whole of her future felicity on earth was involved.

This puzzled Mr. Ripstone. He thought it very odd; and it was, in fact, remarked by his colleagues that he looked most mysterious: nay, one of them, with infinite delicacy, suggested that if anything of a pecuniary character disturbed him, he had a few pounds which were quite at his service; but this was not what Ripstone wanted! It was kind of his friend—very kind; the motive was appreciated highly: but that which he wanted was simply to know the nature of that advice which the widow required. Perhaps it had reference to some particular purchase; perhaps she was anxious to sell out some stock; or, perhaps, it was something about something,—yet how was her future felicity involved? That was the point! and his utter inability to guess even what it could be, kept him in a high state of fever until the clock struck four, when he hastened home to dress, and at five to a minute, he knocked at the door of the widow.

The widow heard that knock. She well knew that it was *his*; and became extremely nervous as he ascended the stairs, and trembled—slightly trembled—as she held forth her hand to receive him.

"My dear Madam," said he, with a face of some considerable length, "what on earth is the matter?"

"Oh! nothing—at least nothing very—*very* particular." The faltering voice of the widow, however, convinced him that there *was* something very particular.

"You are looking very well," he continued, and this was a positive fact. She was looking very well; her rouge had been established with great delicacy of touch, and she wore a richly figured satin dress, while her pearly heaving bosom, her turban, and her waist, were embellished with jewels of the

most sparkling caste, so that really, as the rays of the chandelier fell with the most refined softness upon her, she shone altogether refulgent. It was hence by no means an inappropriate observation, and as it *was* not inappropriate, the widow felt pleased with it rather than not, and vouchsafed a reply, of which the purport was, "Yes, thank Heaven!"

"Well, come; tell me all," said Mr. Ripstone. "You really must, and at once, for I shall not have a moment's peace of mind until I know what it is."

The widow smiled sweetly; and glanced at the mirror playfully, and patted his cheek absolutely! Dinner was announced at this interesting moment; she therefore took his arm, and explained on the stairs that he really was a good, kind creature, and that if he would but wait with becoming patience, he should know all anon.

Very well. This was highly satisfactory as far it went, and they sat down to dinner. The widow on that occasion had not much of an appetite. She managed the soup very fairly; and, on raising the first glass of wine to her lips, the glass itself touched her teeth only twice; but nothing bearing even the semblance of solid food could she manage; no, not even the breast of a delicate chicken, presented by Ripstone himself! She really felt so confused. Even Simpson looked at his mistress as if a slight explanation would have been a great relief to him, but of course he had nothing of the sort. She tried to chat with all her wonted point and eloquence; but that was a dead failure; it could not be done. Happily, however, this was not much perceived by her guest; for although his accustomed politeness induced him to expostulate with her on the popular subject of keeping up the stamina—to express his lively fears that she was not, after all, in the most robust health, and then to hint, with all the delicacy at his command, that it was probably attributable to the fact of her having then something on her mind,—he himself never ate a more excellent dinner. For it happened singularly enough that everything which he more especially favoured had been prepared,—a truly remarkable circumstance, and, moreover, so fortunate being so purely accidental! He therefore enjoyed himself exceedingly, and ate, drank, and chatted with infinite spirit, and was really very amiable—very! but the widow whom he was thus so unconsciously *killing* all the time, and who, knowing that she had a great duty to perform, wished ten thousand times that it were over, had a very unusual palpitation of the heart: it would flutter so! She therefore sighed deeply, while he chatted gaily, and thus this ever memorable dinner passed off.

"Now—now, my dear madam," said Mr Ripstone, when Simpson had left the room, "come, tell me : what is this business, this serious matter?"

He here pressed her warmly, and gazed upon her face very fervently, and her lily hand trembled in his, and she breathed very quickly, averting her smiling face gently, and looked upon the carpet very prudently, while her pulse was one hundred and forty.

"Come—come!" he continued, with surpassing amiability both of expression and of tone, "be calm, and tell me all—all about it."

The widow at this moment, with a most emphatic sigh, observed, "Women are poor silly things."

"Well—well ; but, pray keep me no longer in suspense : it is really very painful to see you unhappy."

"I know you to be a kind, sincere friend," said the widow ; "but is it indeed true that my uneasiness can afflict you?"

"My dear creature ! can you do me the injustice even to doubt it ? You know—you have known me sufficiently long to feel sure that there is nothing I could do to promote your happiness that I would not do with infinite pleasure."

"My friend !" said the widow, and smiled ; and then looked at him earnestly, and warmly pressed his hand as she added, "Are you quite sure of that !"

Mr. Ripstone himself now became much confused. He could not understand it. What—what could it mean ? He could not tell : he could not conceive : he could not even call up a rational conjecture on the subject.

The widow saw his confusion. It somewhat relieved her. She became in proportion more calm ; but, although she felt very considerably better, she did not then feel herself equal to the task. He pressed her with great warmth and eloquence again and again for an explanation ; but her nerves still required composure. She would have coffee first : then, if possible, she would explain the whole affair. Accordingly for another mortal hour was Ripstone tortured, for, although a great variety of inuendos were shot like arrows, well feathered and pointed, not one hit the bull's eye of his comprehension : they all of them fell very wide of the mark. This was tiresome—particularly tiresome to both ; but it really was *not* the widow's fault : it was Ripstone's, and Ripstone's alone !

Well, the widow rang for coffee, and retired to give some further instructions. "Now," thought Ripstone, "for this most extraordinary disclosure !" He rose ; and on her return the widow found him apparently lost in admiration of a Titian ; but, although his eyes were, his thoughts were not, upon that

His thoughts were—no matter : the coffee was produced, and he was again sweetly summoned.

With all the elegance and grace of which she was capable the widow sipped and sipped, alternately examining the countenance of Ripstone, and the delicate pattern of her cup. At length, feeling that this was not the way to make progress, as Ripstone would *not* understand, she breathed a sigh fiercely—one sigh,—and took courage ; and while still intently gazing upon her cup, as if she really had never noticed the pattern before, she smiled, and then said, “I’m very silly,—I am—really—like a child. I wished to have your advice upon a matter of some—slight—in fact, of considerable—for it is to me of considerable importance—and yet—do you think that I can get my heart high enough ? Upon my word, a mere girl of fifteen would have far more courage. I am but a poor, weak, simple creature, after all.”

Mr. Ripstone now looked unspeakably anxious, and said, “My dear lady, proceed—pray proceed : it is something, I fear, of great moment.”

“It is something,” rejoined the widow, who now felt that the ice had been broken,—“it is something of a character extremely delicate, which—really I cannot—indeed—indeed I cannot—I dare not explain even now.”

The expression of Mr. Ripstone’s round face now became very droll. “Extremely delicate ?” thought he. “It’s very odd.” He scarcely knew that he should be justified in urging her to proceed. The phrase “extremely delicate,” really struck him as being very strong ; and yet when he came to think of it, he found that his impression had been that that phrase really signified something extremely indelicate, which he now at a glance saw was extremely incorrect, and therefore said, with his characteristic firmness and force, “My dear lady, if you really have confidence in my honour and sincerity—”

“My friend,” interrupted the widow, “I have—believe me, I have the greatest possible confidence in both : you are, in fact, now, the only soul in whom I can confide. I will, therefore explain. A woman,” she continued, with great deliberation, “is considered, of course, the weaker vessel. She is so naturally, and is recognised as being so socially ; and hence it is, I presume, that society has prescribed that the weaker shall be wooed by the stronger. I believe that view of the matter to be correct ?”

“Oh ! perfectly—perfectly—quite—quite correct, my dear lady ; proceed.”

“Well, a woman—upon my life I scarcely know how to put

it,—but a man in the majority of cases having reference to marriage, is presumed to possess advantages—not merely of a moral and physical description,—but in a pecuniary point of view he is presumed to possess advantages, and hence, I apprehend, it is clearly understood that in all such cases the proposal should, of course, proceed from him. Am I right?”

“Oh!—quite—decidedly—quite right!” cried Ripstone, more puzzled than ever.

The softest, the sweetest, and most delicate smile illuminated her face as she resumed :

“But, suppose—I will put it so—suppose—leaving out of the question all moral and physical superiority—suppose the pecuniary advantages of the lady to be infinitely superior to those of the person to whom she is really attached—do you consider that in such a case she would really be justified in proposing to *him* ? Would you hold such an act to be indiscreet, or imprudent?”

“Not if he were really a man of honour,” replied Ripstone, “and had proved himself worthy of that lady’s choice. Most decidedly not. Were he as poor as Job himself, in such a case she would be justified, seeing that custom *alone* prescribes the contrary course.”

“Well, now, that is indeed a remarkable coincidence,” rejoined the widow, archly. “It happens to be precisely my opinion. I was thinking the other day that in a case of that description the propriety of such a step could scarcely be impugned. But, suppose—let us put it to ourselves, just by way of illustration, for I really should like to be clear upon the point—suppose, then, that I,—being disengaged, of course,—had, let me see, say some thousands a-year ; and that you—being equally disengaged—had an income, we will say, of as many hundreds. Very well. Now, in the event of my proposing to you—you know this is, of course, a mere suppositions case,—but, in such an event, would you accept that proposal?”

“Why, that,” replied Ripstone, “would mainly depend upon whether I had known you sufficiently long to be satisfied that the happiness of both would be thereby enhanced.”

“But, assuming all the facts having reference to knowledge and to feelings to be in every particular precisely as they are, if I were to offer this hand, would you accept it?”

“Decidedly. Without a moment’s hesitation.”

“My friend—my dear friend!” said the widow. “It is yours!”

Mr. Ripstone seemed absolutely lost in amazement ; he seized her extended hand, however, and pressed and kissed it



with affectionate fervour. They both felt so happy ! They embraced. Their veins tingled with the drollest sensations. Again they embraced, and again ! when Stanley dashed into the room.

The lovers started. They were paralyzed. Had Satan himself at that moment appeared, they could not have been struck with more terror. They could *not*, or they would have sunk into the earth.

"Good God !" exclaimed Stanley, whose eyes flashed with fiery indignation. "What—*what* is the meaning of this? *Mother*, what am I to understand?"

The widow sank into a chair overwhelmed with confusion.

"Leave the room, sir !" cried Stanley, pointing fiercely to the door, and addressing Ripstone, who wished to explain. "Leave instantly ! Stay another moment, at your peril !"

Poor Ripstone, of course, was aware that he had done nothing wrong : but, then, he happened to know Stanley too well to remain, and hence he quitted not only the room, but the house, as soon as possible.

"*Mother !*" cried Stanley, when Ripstone had departed. "you have perilled, if not sacrificed, your own honour and mine !"

"No ! Stanley, my dearest love,—no !" exclaimed the widow, when extending her arms wildly, she fell upon his neck, and clinging to him instantly fainted.

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## CHAPTER IV.

STANLEY HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH RIPSTONE, AND UPSETS HIS NERVES ALTOGETHER.

WHEN Stanley had summoned the servants with due promptitude and violence, he left the room, and such restoratives as were immediately available were applied with great delicacy and zeal to the temples, palms, and nostrils of the overwhelmed widow. The attendants were, however, in an intellectual maze, out of which they could not see their way at all clearly, for their mistress had not been accustomed to faint : and then that Mr. Ripstone ! where was Mr. Ripstone ? It really seemed to them, viewing the thing as they did in all its varied ramifications, to be very suspicious ; and they looked at each other with an aspect which denoted that they absolutely felt it to be mysterious in the extreme. Surely Stanley had not pitched the man out of the window ?—and yet it was thought extremely probable.

Simpson opened the window with a view to the immediate satisfaction of that thought ; but Mr. Ripstone was not in the area ! nor was he impaled upon any one of the spikes ! This had a direct tendency to render the mystery more dense, for who had let him out ? As not one of them had had that honour, the impression became general that he was still in the room. They hence examined every place in which it was both most likely and most unlikely for a gentleman to be concealed, and the butler was just on the point of ascertaining whether the well-known hat and peculiar cloak of Mr. Ripstone were in the hall, when the widow developed striking symptoms of reanimation and soon after retired for the night, without, however, imparting the slightest information as to the cause of the occurrence to her puzzled attendants, who—having created innumerable conjectures with the celebrated tact and ingenuity of their order—were by no means satisfied, but felt, strongly and most acutely felt, that there was at the bottom of it something.

As soon as the widow had retired the drawing-room bell was rung, in a style in which it never was rung by any chance save when Stanley was at home. There could not be two opinions about who had pulled the rope. It was therefore immediately answered by Simpson, who, while receiving orders for supper, looked curiously round and round the room.

"What are you looking for?—what have you lost?" demanded Stanley, in a tone that was not extremely pleasing.

"Me, sir ? Nothing, sir—nothing," mumbled Simpson.

"I only thought, sir, that perhaps Mr. Ripstone——"

"What !" exclaimed Stanley.

Simpson muttered something, of which the design was apparently to convey some idea, and vanished.

Now, albeit the widow retired to bed, her sensibilities had received so powerful a shock that she found it impossible to sleep. She turned and turned again, and sighed and wept, and exclaimed, *sotto voce*, "Why should I have been so alarmed ? The position was peculiar, certainly—there's no denying that ; but, then, why should a mother thus fear her own son ?"

To this natural interrogatory she felt unable to give a perfectly satisfactory answer, and hence really began to form a resolution to break the chains which she herself had forged to shackle her will. But then her fond love for Stanley ! And what can be compared with the love of a mother ? It is ardent, enduring, and pure to the last. There is—there can on earth be—no love so devoted, so constant, so powerful. By its

virtue a mother's soul seems centred in her child, in whom alone exists the power to fill her heart with pure joy or to plunge it into misery the most poignant: still be that fond love the source of rapture or of wretchedness, it shines in the ascendant till life is extinct.

In its most comprehensive sense the widow was actuated by this love for Stanley. He was the pride of her heart: she idolized, adored him! Still she thought it hard, that she should be so controlled, because—as she explained to herself again and again very pointedly—if there be one state of life in which a lady has the privilege of being more independent of family influences than in another, it is distinctly the state of widowhood: she therefore held control to be intolerable. She did not, she could not by any means recognise the right of a son to dictate to a mother at all under the peculiarly afflicting circumstances of the case: she thought it highly incorrect and very presumptuous, and the style in which she resolved to be thenceforth mistress of her own actions, as far, at least, as matrimonial matters were concerned, was so extremely energetic that it eventually sent her to sleep.

In the morning, when she met Stanley at the breakfast-table, he requested an explanation of the scene on the previous night. "Mother," said he, "what is the meaning of that which I last evening witnessed?"

"What you saw," replied the widow, "I grant, was—odd: but then, under the circumstances——"

"Circumstances? What were the circumstances?"

"Why, my love, the fact is—I feel that I must tell you—a proposal had just been made as you entered."

"A proposal? What, of marriage?" exclaimed Stanley, knitting his brows and pursing his lips into an expression which fluctuated finely between a smile and a sneer. "I had no idea the fellow had so much impudence in him. And—you *accepted* that proposal?"

"Why, my dearest love, look at my present position. It is really very lonely, more especially——"

"Mother! do you mean to tell me that you have promised to marry Ripstone?"

"Why, what could I do? He is a very old friend; and while conscious of his fondness for you, I well knew that you had ever been sincerely attached to him."

"I!—I attached to him!"

"What, not to your own Pippin?"

"Pippin! Mother, are you mad? But the thing is too monstrously absurd. If you must marry, choose some one

worthy of you. Why have you not a becoming degree of pride? There are hundreds of men—men of influence and station!—with whom you might form an alliance. For Heaven's sake banish from your mind the idea of throwing yourself away upon so paltry a creature as this poor fool Pippin."

The fact of Stanley arguing any point which he had made up his mind to carry was a species of condescension for which the widow was not prepared: it had therefore, alone, no inconsiderable weight: but when in addition to this he assailed her vanity, the consideration sank deeply into her heart. What Stanley had suggested *might* occur! She might become the wife of a man of influence—perhaps, of a Baronet!—why not of a Peer? She could really see nothing to prevent it! Yet how on earth could she ever look in the face of Mr. Ripstone again?

"Leave Pippin to me," cried Stanley. "Let him be invited here this evening. I will write to say that I am anxious to see him. I will make him feel that if he values his peace he had better not attempt to form an alliance with you."

An invitation was accordingly sent to Mr. Ripstone immediately after breakfast, and Stanley then explained—without, however, entering at all into particulars—that he had left Eton. The widow, being of course utterly ignorant of the fact of his having been expelled, was amazed.

And so was Mr. Ripstone. The night preceding he had not an hour's sleep. He had been racked with conflicting emotions. He had placed,—with an eye to his own prospect of peace,—the widow's love in juxtaposition with Stanley's tyrannous spirit, and found the balance against the former to be so considerable, that he really began to think that his present state of life was, on the whole, to be preferred. But, when he received the invitation, his ideas on the subject were in an instant, as if by magic, metamorphosed. The matter then assumed a very different aspect. He saw at a glance, and with a distinctness which was absolutely marvellous in itself, that Stanley, having had the prominent features of the case explained, wished to acknowledge his error and to apologize for his abruptness, which Ripstone very naturally held to be very proper. "I always thought," he observed, with great point to himself, "that that youth was all right at the bottom, and this tends to confirm the correctness of that thought, for he evidently feels that he was wrong, and is now anxious to make all the reparation in his power. But I'll have no apologies! No! it shall *never* be said that I exacted humiliation from any living soul."

Actuated by this extremely generous sentiment, he went, with a light heart through those toils of the day which are

notoriously inseparable from an official existence, and in the evening repaired to the mansion of his love.

The widow was invisible. He found Stanley in the drawing-room alone, and the coldness with which he received him not only contrasted very strongly with his own elastic bearing, but had the effect of inspiring him at once with the conviction that he had made a slight mistake.

"Be seated, Mr. Ripstone," said Stanley, in a haughty tone. "I sent for you, *sir*," he continued, "to demand an explanation of your conduct last night."

"An explanation?" echoed Ripstone with great timidity.

"Ay, sir! An explanation."

"Re-ally," observed Ripstone, who felt much confused, "I thought—I hoped—that—all had been explained."

"Sir! you have known me sufficiently long to know that I am not a man to be trifled with. Instantly, therefore, explain to me all that has reference to the *disgraceful* scene I witnessed last night, or you will hear from me, sir, in the morning; and, if you will *not* go out, I'll post you as the vilest coward that ever crawled."

In this there was nothing which could by any process be misunderstood; all was perfectly candid, straightforward and clear; but, then, what could Ripstone say? His gallantry forbade him to explain all, because that would have been most unfair towards the widow; and then the idea of going out!—why, he had never fired off a pistol in his life! he had never even had one in his hand!—while the fact of his being posted, or brought before the public in any such shape, would in all probability accomplish his ruin! He therefore knew not how to act in this extremity: he paused and was puzzled; but at length he ventured to observe, that he really could not in any honourable act see anything disgraceful.

"Sir," exclaimed Stanley, "you are mistaken if you conceive that I am thus to be put off; I demand an explanation, and will have it, or the only alternative society prescribes."

"But I have nothing to explain," said Mr. Ripstone, "save that just as you entered we were performing that which is, I believe, invariably the little playful innocent prelude to the matrimonial bond." Here Ripstone ventured to smile, for he positively had an idea that he should thus be enabled to draw Stanley into a belief that it was nothing unusual after all.

Stanley, however, was not to be propitiated, for, looking fiercely at Mr. Ripstone, he demanded in a loud voice, and with authoritative emphasis, how he dared to presume to propose to his mother.

"Why," said Mr. Ripstone, "I do not conceive that I have been very daring, or very presumptuous."

"Indeed?" rejoined Stanley, with an expression of contempt. "Compare my mother's wealth with your own!"

"As far as wealth is concerned," said Ripstone blandly, "love levels all distinctions."

"Love!—bah!—an old fool like you indeed talk about love!"

"That's very discorteous," observed Mr. Ripstone: "but I'll not be offended, because I make it an invariable rule not to be offended by any one. I must, however, repeat, that the application of the term 'old fool' is extremely discorteous."

"I know it," said Stanley: "I meant it to be so; and I mean to say farther, what you may deem equally discorteous, that if *ever* I again catch you beneath this roof, or ascertain that you hold even the slightest communication with my mother, in any shape, I'll blow your brains out."

Ripstone pouted his lips, and looked at Stanley in a very straightforward manner. "I'll blow your brains out" were very strong words; in fact, it was on the whole a very sanguinary sentence. He did not approve of it at all, and therefore said with some spirit and point, "Really this, I must confess, is not exactly the sort of reception I might reasonably have anticipated: nor do I acknowledge your right to interfere with the domestic arrangements of your mother and myself."

"Indeed!—do you not? Then, sir, let me tell you that I have such right, and will take special care that it is exercised fully. I am master here, and you shall know it."

"But I have the strongest possible reason," urged Ripstone, "to believe that the feelings of affection between your mother and me are mutual."

"I care not for that," cried Stanley. "Do you flatter yourself for one moment that I shall ever be sufficiently idiotic to recognise you in any shape as *my* father! But without condescending to say another syllable on the subject,—for I will not exact from you anything like a promise, seeing that that would be leading you to suppose that I doubt my own power,—be assured that if ever you dare to communicate, either by word or by letter, with my mother, or ever presume again to enter this house,—(and if you have the temerity to do either, I shall be certain to know it,) I will horsewhip you!"

There are, questionless, some who would have spurned this menace, and who—the widow being willing—would have married her at once, in defiance of all opposition; but Ripstone was not one of these. He was dreadfully alarmed; his whole nervous system had been utterly astonished. He knew the desperate character of Stanley; he knew how fondly his mother loved him, and how zealous she had ever been in his cause: he also knew that if even they *were* to marry in opposition to him,

he should never have a single moment's peace ; and therefore, holding peace to be one of the greatest blessings in life, he rose, bowed, and without giving audible utterance to another word, left the house, with the firm determination to enter it no more.

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## CHAPTER V.

ILLUSTRATES HOW AN ARDENT YOUTH MAY ASSUME MORE CHARACTERS THAN ONE.

THERE is perhaps nothing so grateful to the feelings of mankind as the possession of power. From the wearer of the crown, through all the varied ramifications of society, even down to the vilest beggar that ever blistered his leg to excite sympathy, however much may be said of the power of love, the love of power reigns supreme over all.

Without, however, dwelling upon a subject so deep, for it really is not essential to the progress of this history, it may in all probability be sufficient, for the present, to state that as Stanley fondly cherished this universal love, and was ardently enamoured of its development, he derived no inconsiderable amount of pleasure from the fact of his having broken off the match between his mother and Ripstone ; and as each successful exercise of his power increased it, it soon became abundantly clear that he required but the scope to be one of the most absolute tyrants that ever breathed.

The widow, who had imagined that as his years increased he would become more subdued, now had ample cause to feel that the spirit she had fostered in his infancy was each succeeding year gaining strength. He *would* be supreme ; he would be consulted upon every domestic matter, however foreign to him it might be, from the most important to the most trivial. She could no longer dress as she pleased. Her taste was impugned, and denounced by him as vulgar in the extreme.

"When will you learn to dress in a becoming style !" he would exclaim. "Upon my honour I'll not go out with you. Look at that thing, how it hangs !—there's a fit ! You really have no taste. Upon my life, unless you choose to dress a little near the mark, I'll not go out with you at all."

And this was decidedly the most potent threat he could possibly hold out ; for although she very frequently felt mortified, the pleasure she derived from appearing with him in public was sufficient to heal all the wounds which his tyranny

inflicted at home. No mother could have been more proud of her son. The highest delight she had the power to conceive was that which she experienced on being driven round the park by her Stanley. He was so handsome, so elegant, so aristocratic in his bearing; he drove with so much grace; his cab was so attractive, his horse so beautiful; while Bob looked so much like the groom of a peer, that really it was such pleasure to be with him!—nothing could surpass it.

And it was a very stylish turn-out. His horse was full of blood and pride; and while his cab was of the most modern build, Bob was one of the most undeniable tigers that ever sprang.

Of course it was not long before he was surrounded by associates: but however extraordinary to some it may appear, it is nevertheless true that he was free from the most prevalent vice. He had given dinners to dozens of high-spirited fellows, and had accepted invitations in return; still in this particular point had he escaped contamination.

The family he visited most frequently at this period was that of Captain Jolliffe, the father of his friend Albert, whose cause he had espoused at Eton, and who still entertained for him feelings of the warmest friendship; and here he soon became a favourite. The Captain himself, although he could not but feel that he was somewhat too inflexible, highly esteemed him, and even applauded him privately for the part he had taken in the rebellion, invariably addressing him as General, in honour of his having been the leader on that occasion; for he, like every liberal-minded man, strongly felt that the practice of flogging young men in precisely the same fashion as that in which infants are flogged, was, to say the least of it, extremely indelicate. Whether Albert was at home or not, therefore, the Captain was invariably pleased to see the General, and as the pleasure was reciprocal, his visits were frequent.

There was, however, one member of the family who derived peculiar pleasure from these visits, and this was Amelia, the daughter of the Captain, and one of the most elegant, interesting, loveable creatures that ever fascinated man. Amelia, at the period of Stanley's introduction, had just completed her twentieth year. She was not strictly beautiful, although her features were regular, and peculiarly expressive; but she was so graceful, so elegant, so intelligent, yet so gentle, that he who, having conversed with her for an hour, could perceive that she really lacked absolute beauty, must have been dull and cold.

She became attached to Stanley, not indeed from the very



moment she saw him; for having associated his expulsion from Eton with the idea of recklessness, she of course had that prejudice to overcome, albeit she was even then struck with the extreme manliness of his bearing, his fine open countenance, and bold expressive eye,—but before she had been long in his society, she regarded him with a love so intense, that her heart absolutely seemed centred in his.

Stanley at once perceived this, for in such a case no prompter is required. No preliminary education is essential to the perfect knowledge of that, for a man becomes master of the language of love at once. No woman who really loves need employ any other. Give her but a moment's opportunity to let her eyes meet those of the object of her love, and their souls at once seem to commune with surpassing eloquence. Of course the practice of "making eyes" is a very different thing altogether. They who resort to this practice are fraudulent bankrupts in love. The timid, soft, involuntary glance alone is entitled to claim an alliance with nature,—a glance which even the eyelids would, but cannot, conceal. Such a glance Stanley received from Amelia as she drew on her glove to retire after dinner on the day of his first introduction, and by that glance he knew that she loved him.

And Stanley loved her. She was the first for whom he had ever entertained an affectionate feeling apart from that which is engendered by consanguinity; and as of female society he had known till then nothing, it will not be deemed strange that he should have become at once enamoured of one so amiable, so innocent, so unaffected as Amelia. Had he seen more, or known more, of the influence either of the virtuous or of the abandoned, he might not, and would not have been so immediately susceptible of that sentiment which had taken full possession of his soul; but being, as he was, uncontaminated and inexperienced, his heart was taken by storm. He did love her: he felt even then that he loved her; and although that feeling did not subdue his spirit, it appeared to have completely changed its course. Her appearance, moreover, at once forbade him to suppose that she had not those intellectual qualities which are essential to the permanency of affection, and the conversation which he subsequently held with her that evening had the effect of confirming the belief he had inspired, that she was as intelligent as she was gentle; as confiding as she was pure.

From that day Stanley's visits became constant; and as Albert was then at home, the lovers had opportunities of conversing with each other almost daily, without exciting the suspicions of the Captain, from whom Albert advised Stanley to keep the affair at present a secret.

Things, however, were not permitted to go on long thus. Albert was soon to go to Cambridge, when the affair could be kept secret no longer, seeing that Stanley could not then go down, day after day, to the Captain's residence at Richmond, without rendering his object apparent. He therefore proposed to himself, first, to convince Albert that delay was altogether unnecessary; secondly, to declare himself to Amelia; and, thirdly, to break the subject to the Captain, which he naturally held to be the most difficult of all.

The first was soon accomplished, and the next day afforded an opportunity for the achievement of the second. Amelia was sitting at the piano; she, Stanley, and Albert only were in the room; and when Albert had received the silent cue, he very correctly went to the door which opened into the lawn, and left the lovers together.

For Stanley this was a most anxious moment, and even Amelia felt rather confused and awkward, and ran over the keys with a tremulous hand, and struck an infinite variety of imperfect chords, and played really in the most unscientific manner possible; for it is a striking fact that she absolutely anticipated something bearing the semblance of a declaration at that very moment.

"Miss Joliffe," said Stanley, after a pause which created a powerful sensation; and he stuck at this point for a second or two, and then resumed—"That is a very sweet air you were playing."

"Yes—it—you have heard it before, I believe?" And as she spoke, her eyes involuntarily met his; and she turned very pale, and slightly trembled.

"Amelia," said Stanley, and their eyes again met, "I cannot be mistaken. We love—yes, I feel that we love each other fondly. Am I not correct? That look renders me happy in the conviction of my proudest anticipation being realised." And he kissed her fair brow, which in an instant became crimson, as if by magic. "From the moment I first had the happiness to see you," he continued, pressing her still tremulous hand with all the fervour of affection, "I have loved—may I not *now* say my own dear Amelia? I am impatient—you will say that I am; but, Amelia, you will consent to my speaking upon this subject to your father? I knew that you would!" he continued, as she slightly—or, as he thought that she slightly—pressed the hand which held hers, and he fervently kissed the hand he held, and said "Bless you, my Amelia!" as Albert, without any strict regard unto the correctness of the tune, but with electric effect, sang, "*And I'm coming! and*

*I'm coming!*" which in itself was strictly proper, inasmuch as the Captain at that very instant appeared upon the lawn.

Stanley therefore retired from the piano with all the ease at his command, while Amelia attempted to play a favourite fantasia; but as she really made very sad havoc of the first dozen bars, she very naturally thought that if she turned over the leaves of her music-book rapidly instead, it would be, under the circumstances, perhaps quite as well.

"Well, General," said the Captain, as he entered with Albert, "we think of going for a ride; will you join us?"

"With pleasure," replied Stanley, being anxious to relieve Amelia.

"My girl," cried the Captain, addressing Amelia, "come too; the air will brace you."

"Not this morning, papa," said Amelia tremulously.

"You are not well," said the Captain, as he kissed her. "There, there, run away to your mamma; she will make you more cheerful."

Amelia was but too happy to leave the room, which she did very promptly, when the horses having been ordered, the General, with the Captain and Albert, mounted at once.

Stanley, in Amelia's view, never looked so elegant as he did on passing the window of the chamber to which she had retired.

After riding pretty smartly for nearly an hour, the Captain, as usual, pulled up, with the view of talking, while his horse was in a short jolting trot, which, he held, had a more direct tendency not only to strengthen a man's lungs but to reduce every corporeal exuberance than any other description of exercise. To prove this position, whether disputed or not, he invariably put forth himself as an example; and certainly, while he had no superabundance of flesh, his lungs were of an order the most powerful. Stanley, however, paid little attention to these distinguishing characteristics at the moment; but embracing the first opportunity that offered, said, "Captain, will you allow me to have five minutes' conversation in the library with you after dinner?"

"Of course! But what is it, General? Out with it now."

"I wish," said Stanley, "to speak quietly on a subject of some importance."

"Ay, I see; and that you can't very comfortably do in a trot. No; very few can; but I have had five-and-twenty years' practice." And the Captain then commenced a long tale, which reached from Richmond to Seringapatam and back, after lashing the Peninsula, the great object of which was to demon-

strate that had he not practised the art of talking while trotting, he should have been, years ago, a dead man.

Amelia, who had been anxiously watching their return from the window of her dressing-room, felt her trepidation increase as they entered the gates; for during their absence, although she was unable to conceive what objection her father could have to one who was in all respects so perfect as Stanley, she had imagined it possible, just possible, that some difficulty might be raised; and that very possibility, unsupported as it appeared to be by anything probable, kept her in a state of the most painful suspense. She however resolved to preserve as tranquil a bearing as possible while at dinner; and Stanley, with the view of relieving her from all embarrassment, addressed nearly the whole of his observations to Mrs. Joliffe, who held him in high admiration.

"Now, General," said the Captain, when the ladies had retired, "we may as well settle this business here. It is warmer than in the library." And he drew nearer the fire, as Albert left the room.

"Sir," said Stanley, "I feel that I shall but awkwardly open this affair."

"Well, if that be the case, General, come to the point at once."

"To come, then, at once to the point," said Stanley; "I love—Amelia."

The Captain looked at him steadily, and rather sternly for several seconds, when relaxing his features, he said, "Well, well, there is nothing very incorrect in that. And you wish to propose—eh? *That*, I presume, is the point."

"It is," returned Stanley; "and your consent will not, I hope, be withheld."

"Why—why," said the Captain, pursing his lips very thoughtfully, and filling his glass, "my girl is a good girl; but then she is young—very young; you are both very young. However, Stanley, this is my answer: I have myself no objection to you personally; on the contrary, I admire your character, as far as I have seen it developed. If, therefore, you can prove to me—what indeed I have at present no reason to doubt—that you are in a position to support my girl in a style to which she has ever been accustomed,—(for, being a poor soldier, I can give her but little,)—I will consent to your marriage, provided of course, that all parties will be willing to sign the contract, in five or six years."

Five or six years! Had the Captain said five or six thousand, it would not have struck Stanley as being more absurd. "Five or six years!" he exclaimed, on recovering from the

state of astonishment into which it had thrown him, for it really seemed for the moment to have taken away his breath. "Five or six years! You are not serious, I presume?"

"Indeed I never was more serious in my life. Would you marry my daughter now?—you, who have seen nothing, absolutely nothing, of the world! Why, sir, it would be about the most insane act of which you could by any possibility be guilty."

"But five or six years!" repeated Stanley, to whom it still appeared an age. "*Why* five or six years?"

"Understand me," replied Captain Joliffe. "I have lived a long time in the world, and know something of the passions by which men are actuated; something of the rocks upon which men split, and of the temptations to which they are exposed. I never will consent, therefore, to the marriage of my daughter with any man, however brilliant may be his prospects, unless he has seen at least something of the world; nor would any father, who has seen what I have seen, and who has the happiness of his child at heart, as I have, God bless her! Take my advice; think of marrying no one until you have had five or six years more experience; and then, as you will know many thousand things, of which you cannot now even dream, you will come to me and say, if I should live so long, 'I feel that you have been my best friend;' and you will have cause to feel it till you sink into the grave, and your children will have reason to bless me."

"But why not say one year?" urged Stanley. "On reflection you must yourself admit that five is an immense length of time."

"Believe me, Stanley, to be your friend when I state that I am inflexible upon this point, namely, that nothing shall induce me to consent to your marriage with Amelia in less than five years; therefore fill your glass and say no more about it. Continue to come as usual. I shall at all times be happy to see you—if possible, more so, than ever I have been; but don't cherish a thought that any power upon earth can shake my expressed determination. But come, come, come, let us join the people above. Reflect on what I have said, and be wise."

## CHAPTER VI.

PROVES HOW POWERFUL SOPHISTRY IS WHEN AN ELOPEMENT IS  
THE OBJECT PROPOSED.

As Stanley entered the drawing-room with the Captain, Amelia rivetted her eyes upon him with an expression of anxiety the most intense. Her fondest hopes were not to be realized!—she felt in an instant that they were not; his features betrayed the disappointment he had experienced, and she burst into tears.

"Amelia! Amelia!" whispered Albert, who had been endeavouring to amuse her during the conference below. "Courage, my girl, courage!"

Amelia strove to conceal her tears, and succeeded in doing so effectually from her father; but Stanley in a moment perceived her agitation, and therefore assumed an air of comparative content, which somewhat relieved her.

"You have no thought of leaving us to-night, General, have you?" said the Captain, as gaily as if nothing had transpired.

"I have ordered my cab at ten," replied Stanley, "as I must be in town early in the morning."

"Well, you will dine with us to-morrow?"

Stanley bowed; and although Amelia conceived that bow to be somewhat too distant, she was unable to reconcile the tone of her father with the idea of his having withheld his consent. She therefore panted between hope and fear until Stanley embraced an opportunity of joining her at the table at which she was apparently reading, when he communicated the result of his conference with the Captain, who, with his lady, had just commenced a game of chess.

"Then why did you look so serious?" said Amelia, when Stanley had explained. "You cannot conceive how much you alarmed me!"

"Five years!" whispered Stanley. "It is an age!"

"Oh, the time will quickly pass," said Amelia; "and we shall have, I hope, many, very many happy hours in each other's society in the interim. It is not as if we were to be separated for five years."

At this moment Stanley's cab was announced, and although he soon after took leave with great gentleness, in driving to town he developed all the wild impetuosity of his nature.

Bob occupied the smallest conceivable space in the extreme corner of the vehicle. He perceived at a glance that there was something rather wrong, and winked, with a view to the acknowledgment of the quickness of his perception, several

times in dark parts of the road. The horse flew over the ground with unparalleled swiftness ; for albeit the whip was not used, an occasionally angry *whiss!* seemed to strike the conviction into him that nothing less than lightning speed would do ; and hence, on reaching town, his wide crimson nostrils were expanded to the utmost stretch, while his neck, back, and haunches were covered with foam.

Five years! Stanley felt it impossible to wait five : pooh! he could not, he *would* not! Yet what could be done? Why, what must be done in such a case? And yet Amelia was a gentle, patient creature, whom he knew the idea of an elopement would shock. No matter: she loved him—he firmly believed that she loved him fondly, passionately ; and this was, in his view, sufficient to justify the attempt.

On the following day, therefore, he started again for Richmond ; and as he then appeared to be somewhat more tranquil, Bob did what he dared not do at the time, namely, venture to intimate something which had reference to his strong disapproval of the state of *his* horse the night preceding. An angry glance from Stanley, however, convinced him that it was not even then a safe course to pursue, and he, therefore, under the circumstances, wisely held his peace.

On his arrival, Stanley found the Captain out, and Amelia walking thoughtfully in the garden. She appeared to be somewhat dejected, while her beautiful Italian greyhound had dropped his tail, and was looking in the face of his gentle mistress with all the intelligence of which those animals are capable, apparently with the view of ascertaining what weighed upon her heart:

"Amelia!" cried Stanley ; and she turned and flew to meet him, and the dog, as it bounded up the path, seemed filled with delight.

"I scarcely expected this happiness to-day," said Amelia, smiling as she blushed. "I much feared that my dear father—that is—but come, come, you must not be impatient! We are yet young. The time will swiftly fly away, will it not?"

"Amelia," said Stanley, still holding her hands, and watching her eyes intently, "I cannot wait five years."

"Come, you must not speak so," said Amelia, gaily, "I shall really begin to be jealous if you do."

"Then you cannot really love me. Where love is, there confidence also must be ; and confidence and jealousy cannot co-exist."

"Then," said Amelia, who never dreamed of opposing anything he advanced. "Then I never can be jealous, for I do love you—dearly."

"If then you love me——"

"If!" interrupted Amelia, playfully pouting her beautiful lips.

"Well, then, *as* you love me, you will not deny me one favour?"

"What is it?"

"Nay, nay!—you must promise me first."

"My Stanley, I will promise. Secure in your honour and the purity of every motive by which you are guided, I feel that I can deny you nothing. What is it?"

Stanley paused. He felt that he might be too precipitate, and therefore at length said,

"My dearest love, I will tell you—before I leave."

"No, now: pray, pray, tell me now: it is cruel to keep me in suspense."

"Amelia, we are, as you have said, both young. It is hence that your father named this odious five years' probation: but why should we waste in doubts and fears the sweetest hours of our youth, the very period at which we are most susceptible of happiness?—why, why, my love, when we have that happiness within our reach should we fail to embrace it?"

"I admit," said Amelia, "that it appears a long time: but then, perhaps, you will be able to prevail on papa to name a somewhat shorter period."

"Impossible! The last words he uttered when conversing on this subject were that he was upon this point inflexible; that nothing on earth could alter his expressed determination. Why then should this be? Granted we are young: what brilliant examples have we of the union of persons under *precisely* similar circumstances! Why should *we* be forbidden to act like others? Why should the ban be peculiarly upon us? My Amelia!—do you believe that we shall be happy?"

"Indeed, indeed, I do; oh, most happy!"

"Then why not at once?—Amelia," he continued, as he perceived her eyes suddenly droop, "you understand me. I have done all that a man of honour could do. I have solicited—earnestly solicited—your hand from the hands of your father, who has consented to our union, but with a proviso which both you and I deem unnecessary, if not unjust. What more can I do? My love, I can do no more, and therefore, as we cannot at once, *with* his consent, be united, there is but one course which, in justice to ourselves——"

"Stanley—Stanley!" cried Amelia, "do not name it. As you love me say no more on the subject, I beseech you! I cannot, must not, *dare* not entertain the thought."

"Reflect, my sweet Amelia; reflect calmly upon the sub-



ject. I do not require an answer now!—say a week hence—a month!”

“My Stanley, I will not *love* you if you urge this matter further. Indeed, you must never allude to it again. A year, a century, would be insufficient to win my consent to that. But you are not serious! Say that you were but jesting, and I will love you more dearly than ever.”

“Amelia, I cannot say that. I *am* serious.”

“Oh, Stanley; consider well what it is you would have me do! Think of my dear father and of my mother, my kind, fond mother, whose affection for me is, and ever has been, most ardent! You *would* not have me utterly destroy that affection?”

“I would not,” replied Stanley.

“I knew it! I knew that you would not. Oh, forgive me for having had the thought.”

“But, my love, you take a superficial view of this matter. Your mother might weep, and your father might be angry; but all this would be but ephemeral. They would soon become reconciled.”

“Never, Stanley, never! My poor mother, indeed, *might*, if her heart were not broken by the shock; but my father never would! Oh, Stanley, Stanley, banish the thought for ever, I never can, I never *will*—”

“When you are calm, my love; reflect when you are calm.”

“I am calm,” rejoined Amelia, firmly; “quite calm. I love you—you know that I love you—most fondly; but never, Stanley, never will I take that step.”

Stanley said no more. He dropped his hands, which still held hers; and having led her across the lawn into the parlour, he stood over her in silence for some moments, when kissing her brow affectionately, he left her in tears.

He paced the lawn for some considerable time in deep thought. He could not tell what course to pursue. Eventually, however, he walked round to the stables, ordered his cab, and drove towards town. On the road he met the Captain, who endeavoured to prevail upon him to return; but, without the slightest manifestation of disappointment, he declined, and drove on.

Poor Amelia had no idea of his having left. As she sat absorbed in tears she expected him every moment to re-enter the room. She dried her eyes, and looked again and again towards the lawn. She could not see him. She went into the garden. No Stanley was there. He surely could *not* have left her so! She would not believe that he had. Even when she ascertained that he had driven off, she felt sure that he

would shortly return ; but when the Captain came home and explained that he had seen him, her worst fears were realized, and although she laboured hard, and to some extent successfully, to conceal her emotion, the thought of his having left her under the circumstances without a word was the most bitter pang she had ever endured.

She had still, however, the hope of seeing him on the morrow ; but then the morrow came without Stanley. Well, surely on the next day ! The next day also came without Stanley ; and the next and the next : a week, which seemed a year, passed, but Stanley did not come.

The Captain thought it strange, and sent Albert to ascertain if he were ill : but excuses came back without Stanley. Another week passed. The Captain sent no more. He began to regard it as a matter of extreme delicacy under the circumstances ; and Albert left for Cambridge.

Amelia now called into action all the power she possessed, with the view of enabling her to bear up against it. But then the thought of having lost him for ever ! The third week passed. The colour left her cheeks : her eyes lost their wonted fire—her spirits their usual buoyancy : yet what could be done ? She felt that to write to *him* would be incorrect ; and yet could there be anything very indelicate in the pursuit of such a course ? When a month had passed she could endure it no longer. She would write, and did to the following effect :—

“ MY DEAR STANLEY,

“ If Amelia be not utterly despised you will come down to Richmond at once. Oh ! Stanley, I cannot endure it. I am distracted. It is cruel, very cruel. My heart is too full to say more, but believe me to be still your most affectionate, although almost broken-hearted

“ AMELIA.”

On the receipt of this, Stanley—albeit he could not help feeling its force—experienced more than that common satisfaction which springs from the success of a deeply laid scheme. It developed precisely that state of mind to which he had been ardently anxious to bring her. He had kept away expressly in order to prove that he had enslaved her by making her feel that his absence was intolerable. He therefore detained the servant whom she had secretly despatched, and wrote the following answer :—

“ MY OWN SWEET GIRL,

“ You are still, and ever will be, dearer to me than life ; but my absence has been prompted by the conviction, that during

the probationary period which has been named, and which, indeed, you have sanctioned, it were better, as that period ~~must~~ elapse, for us to communicate with each other as seldom as possible, lest I may be tempted to renew those solicitations which appear to be so utterly abhorrent to your feelings. I will, however, as you desire it, drive down in the morning, when I hope to find you perfectly well.

"I am, my Amelia, still your own

"STANLEY."

This greatly relieved her. It reanimated her hopes. She felt that she was still beloved by him whom she adored, and was comparatively happy; and when he came the next morning she endeavoured to smile with her accustomed sweetness, and forbore to employ even the accents of reproof; but Stanley perceived that she had endured the most intense mental agony, and that, as he was still most affectionately attentive, she loved him if possible more fondly than before.

The subject was not renewed. Not a syllable having reference to his absence passed his lips, save to the Captain, to whom he made certain specious excuses. He dined there; and as he endeavoured to enslave her still more by calling up all his powers of fascination, he left her so happy! He went the next day and the next; still not a single syllable on the subject breathed; but, on the day following that, he renewed the attack, having found that he had so completely gained her heart as to render resistance improbable in the extreme.

"My dear Amelia," said he, as they sat in the arbour; "I cannot of course tell, love, how *you* feel; but really, in your society, I experience such happiness!"

"Indeed, my Stanley, it is mutual," said Amelia. "It is hence that your absence induced so much anguish."

"Why, then," said Stanley, "should we ever be absent from each other? Amelia! forgive me; but I feel that I must again urge my suit. I must again try to prevail upon you to listen to that which——"

"Stanley, Stanley!" said Amelia, bursting into tears; "pray, pray do not mention that subject again."

"I know your extreme delicacy," he continued, "and appreciate it highly; but let me reason with you for a moment. You believe that your parents have your happiness at heart?"

"Oh! yes," replied Amelia. "Of that I am convinced."

"How then can you believe that they would be angry to see you happy?"

"I do not," said Amelia. "I feel that nothing could impart to them greater delight."

"Then you do not expect to be happy with me?"

"O Stanley! you know I feel sure that our happiness would be perfect."

"Then how can you suppose that when they see that you are happy, their anger will last?"

Amelia's head drooped, and she was silent.

"Come," continued Stanley. "come, look at this matter in a rational point of view. I believe, fully believe, their affection to be firm; but I cannot associate firmness with the love which one venial act of disobedience can for ever destroy. My sweet girl! confide in me!—All, all, will be well. Come say, my love, say that you will at once be mine!"

"O Stanley!" cried Amelia, who was able to resist no longer, "you are indeed my soul's guide. You will be kind to me, my love? Oh, yes!—I feel, I know that you will be kind to me."

"This is a moment of happiness! Now do I feel that you love me indeed! My dear girl, words are insufficient to express the ardour of my affection: my life shall be devoted to prove it. Prepare, my sweet, at once. Let our happiness to-morrow be complete. Once over, and all will be well. I may depend upon your firmness!"

"Stanley, I will be firm!"

They then returned from the arbour, and after dinner, Stanley, having delivered into her hands a paper containing a few brief instructions, and extorted from her another declaration that her mind was made up, left, with the view of making the arrangements which were essential to the performance of the highly important business of the morrow.

The morrow came; and at ten o'clock Stanley was at breakfast at an inn at Richmond; and at eleven a lady closely veiled, enveloped in a bronze satin cloak, and attended by a servant, inquired for Mr. Fitzgerald, and was immediately shown—according to instructions—into the room which Stanley occupied. He received this lady with great formality, and directed the waiter, by whom she had been introduced, to send his servant up immediately; but the moment they were alone, Stanley embraced her, exclaiming, "My noble girl! now have I proved your devotion."

"My Stanley," said Amelia, who trembled with great violence, and looked pale as death as she spoke,—“thus far—thus far, have I kept my word; but on my knees, I implore you to urge me no further.”

"Hush!" cried Stanley, raising her as Bob, who knew his cue, knocked at the door. "Confide in me, my sweet wife!—

Still, still confide in me ! Come in," he added, and Bob most respectfully entered, hat in hand.

With all possible delicacy, and with innumerable cheering expressions, Stanley proceeded to divest Amelia of her bonnet and cloak, which he placed with great tact upon Bob, who appeared to be inexpressibly delighted. He was, it is true, somewhat shorter than Amelia ; but that was of no great importance, as it merely made his train a little longer, and while he felt that the style of the bonnet became him well, he held the muff in the most ladylike manner imaginable.

While Bob was uniting the little hooks and eye from the top to the very bottom of the cloak, with the laudable view of concealing his boots effectually, Stanley was preparing Amelia's disguise—Bob's hat and his own roquelaure.

"Now," said Stanley, "let us see, sir, how much like a lady you can walk." And Bob paced the room with all the dignity and grace at his command, although he occasionally turned to look at his train, and laughed with infinite enthusiasm while Stanley was endeavouring to raise the spirits of Amelia, who had sunk into a chair in a state of exhaustion.

"My dear, sweet girl !" cried Stanley, "have confidence : have courage. Be assured that we shall both have cause to bless this happy day. Now," he continued, addressing Bob, "you know, sir, what you have to do ; take care that you do it well."

"I will, sir. God bless you, miss," said Bob, "I wish you joy, and many happy returns ;" and having curtsied, and veiled himself closely, he walked with due elegance from the inn, promptly followed by the Captain's servant.

Stanley had no sooner seen Bob safely off, than he completed Amelia's disguise, rang for the bill, and ordered his cab to be brought to the door as soon as possible ; and as the waiter saw Bob, as he believed, upon a chair with his hat on, he naturally inferred that he had been taken very suddenly ill, and hence proceeded at once to obey orders. The horse was already harnessed. He had *but* to be put to ; and when the bill was brought, the cab was at the door. Stanley, therefore, in an instant settled the amount ; and to the great admiration of the attendants, who regarded him as a kind and most considerate master, assisted poor Amelia with great care into the cab, stepped round, seized the reins, and drove off.

## CHAPTER VII.

## BOB TAKES HIS PEDESTRIAN TOUR INCOG.

WHEN James, the devoted servant by whom Amelia had been attended to the inn, followed Bob, he did not entertain the smallest doubt about his being his young mistress ; for while he knew the cloak and bonnet so remarkably well, that he could have sworn conscientiously to either, Bob walked with indisputable elegance and ease—a fact which will by no means be considered extraordinary on its being announced that Stanley had trained him throughout the whole of the previous night, by making him pace the widow's drawing-room clad in her habiliments, until he became satisfied with the graceful character of his carriage, which could not in the nature of things happen, albeit the practice was extremely severe, until just as the day began to dawn.

In consequence of this training, Bob naturally felt somewhat fatigued ; but it must not be presumed that this circumstance tended, even in the slightest degree, to subdue his spirit. On the contrary, he gloried in the performance of the task ; he held it to be a thing in which his honour was involved, and felt proud of having been chosen to play a part so peculiarly important. But the particular consideration from which he derived the greatest pleasure, was that of *how* he should work the respectable victim behind him. He was able to dive to some considerable depth into the thoughts, the secret thoughts of that individual ; and as he had a peculiarly aristocratic contempt for him,—holding him as he did, notwithstanding his cockade, to be in the social scale, one chalk below him—he resolved to make him feel before he had done with him, that in life there are positions more congenial to the feelings of a respectable person than that which he occupied then.

*In limine*, however, Bob had one great difficulty to surmount : he knew nothing of the vicinity of Richmond. He had a perfect knowledge only of the direct road to town, and as he wished to avoid going that way, he had turned round by Petersham Rise on speculation ; but as to the point to which it led, or to which it was likely to lead, he was in a state of the most absolute ignorance. He nevertheless went to the bottom boldly, and made a little turn to the right ; but as he found that the very narrow path he was pursuing had a tendency to lead him back to Richmond, he branched off at once to the left, and thus approached the noble porch of a magnificent edifice, the appearance of which struck him as being so extraordinary that he stopped, partly in order to lose a little time, and partly with

a view of lavishing upon that edifice looks of admiration. The particular architectural order of this noble fane—and nothing *can* be more correct than to state, without any unnecessary delay, that it was Petersham church before which he stopped—is peculiarly its own. It is neither Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, nor Composite; nor does it belong to any of those three which modern architects in their wantonness have designated Gothic, French and Persian. It forms an order of itself, which, moreover, never has been, and probably never will be, copied in any civilised part of the globe. Bob viewed its extraordinary steeple, which “pointing to the skies,” stands boldly in the full development of its height, which being nearly three feet and three quarters from its base to its ball, forcibly strikes, even in the present day, the eyes of all beholders. He then directed his attention to the wonderful tower upon which it stands in all its glory; and having with critical minuteness examined the twelve triumphal turrets, composed of antique bricks and mortar, by which the tower itself is surmounted, he was about to take a view of the glorious ecclesiastical chimney, of which the pot pretty nearly reaches the summit of the noble cupola, when Sir Samuel Ray, whom he had often seen at the Captain’s house, and whom he knew to be on terms of extreme intimacy with the family, turned into the passage in which he was standing.

Bob was startled. What was to be done in this extremity? If he met him, Sir Samuel was certain to speak; and if he walked back, Sir Samuel was certain to follow. He had not much time then to turnover many ideas in his mind, and therefore resolved at once to cut Sir Samuel dead.

He accordingly gathered up his veil in treble flutes, with the view of making his face as invisible as possible, and walked on; and as Sir Samuel raised his hat in the similitude of a preliminary to some highly-complimentary greeting, Bob tossed his head proudly, and averting his face, passed on with an air of disdain the most superb.

Sir Samuel looked—of course he looked; and so did James, who, nevertheless, felt perfectly justified in touching his hat to Sir Samuel, conceiving, as he did very wisely, that he had nothing to do with any misunderstanding that might have arisen between them. Still he could not but look; for he thought it very remarkable, especially as the existence of any such misunderstanding was a circumstance of which he was altogether unconscious.

Having arrived at the end of the church-passage, to his entire satisfaction, Bob turned to the right, and went on until he saw some white gates, which he entered, in the perfect conviction

that the avenue before him led somewhere. Up this avenue accordingly he walked, and on reaching the top, found another to the left, which had no gravelled path; and as it had rained almost incessantly during the three preceding weeks, the narrow track which pedestrians had established by wearing away the grass, was particularly filthy. Instead, however, of being induced by this circumstance to retrace his steps, Bob proceeded, and soon found it a source of great comfort to him, seeing that James's shoes were long-quartered and very thin, and his hose were of the purest virgin whiteness. On, therefore, he went, slipping about in all directions, for the path was very boggy, and the mud was very greasy, and James followed him, although it really turned the whole of his notions of cleanliness completely inside out. He tried at first to pick his way with great presence of mind, and did for a time hop about with much energy; but when, having got into the thick of it, the mud had sucked his right shoe off, and nearly filled it, he gave the affair up as hopeless, and took the bogs as they came with the most exemplary resignation, although he did undeniably perspire at every pore; for whenever a part presented itself of a character more filthy than the parts adjacent, that part Bob invariably took.

By dint of extraordinary perseverance they eventually arrived at the end of this avenue, and having passed the gates there established, found themselves upon Ham Common, where a posse of little raggamuffins made some remarks upon the disgusting state of James's white stockings, which James, however, treated with appropriate contempt, being unable to leave his post, although it is not by any means clear that he would have borne it so tranquilly had he been alone.

On reaching the common, Bob, instead of going round by the pond on the right, like a decent respectable Christian, went straight over the grass, making each footstep visible six inches deep, while every hole thus made was immediately filled up with water.

To affirm that James approved of this proceeding were to affirm that which is not particularly true. He did not; but then how could he act? How could he help himself? Having reached, however, as nearly as possible the middle of the common, he saw a small hope near the horizon riding gallantly on a cloud, which bore a remarkably black threatening aspect. This he hailed as a blessing, and stepping a little closer to Bob, said, with all due humility, "I beg pardon, Miss,—but if you please, I think we're going to have a shower."

Of this Bob took no other notice than that of tossing his head superciliously.



"Well," observed James to himself, somewhat piqued, "I only mentioned it. Let her catch her death if she likes—what do I care? Let her be laid up for a month with the rheumatiz—what's it to me? I only wish she wasn't a-going for to take such a tower."

This last observation was excessively natural, and much to the purpose; for he really began to think that they had already walked quite far enough, taking all things into consideration, including the mud. Bob, however, was decidedly not of this opinion, and hence he kept straight on until he reached the other side of the common, when he turned very deliberately to the right, and having passed through a gate, which an old woman had opened with a very low curtsy, he got at once into a sort of lane, which promised, greatly to his satisfaction, to be a long one.

"Well," said James, who really felt tired, for beyond all dispute, the process of walking any great distance slowly is fatiguing, "I should like to know how much further she's a-going. I hope she'll have enough on it afore she gets home."

This acute observation did not reach Bob,—and if it had, it would not have made even the smallest difference; for he felt at that moment more highly pleased than ever, having just turned a little to the left, and found himself in another long lane, which appeared to have no end at all.

After walking down this lane for about a mile and a half, James began to look at the thing very seriously indeed. Had he known how far he had to go, or even where, without any immediate reference to the distance, or anything, however slight, about it, he would not have cared so much; but called upon, as he was, to walk on and on, at the rate of about half a mile an hour, in a state of utter darkness as to where he was going, and without any earthly object in view than that of continuing to follow, it was really so dreadfully tiresome, that he himself began to wonder how flesh and blood could stand it.

Where was she off to? What could she have got into her head? When did she mean to turn? What time could she expect to get back? These were questions which he found it impossible to solve. It was a profound mystery to him. He could not fathom it at all! for Bob still kept on, the grace and dignity of his deportment being interfered with only by an occasional convulsive but half-suppressed chuckle.

At length the ancient town of Kingston met their view, and the spirits of the victim did somewhat revive. "At all events," said he, "this is the end of the tower, and *may* her legs ache well afore she gets back." The probability of such an occur-

rance in some degree restored him to good humour, and he drew off his gloves to put up his collar, and to raise his cravat, with the view of making himself appear as respectable under the circumstances as possible ; but no sooner had they entered the town than Bob deliberately turned into the King's Arms, public-house, and called for a glass of hot brandy and water.

James, who stood at the door, looked amazed. He was perfectly bewildered. He peeped in again and again, and saw Bob at the bar, with the glass to his lips. What ! a delicate and highly-accomplished young lady bounce boldly into a common public-house, call for a glass of hot brandy and water, and drink it at the bar ? He could have relished a little himself certainly, for he felt very faint ; but the idea !

"Issay," said he to a coach-porter standing near the door,—  
"I say, get us a pint of ale ; I'm fit to drop. *Good luck to you, make haste !*"

The porter darted into the house with all possible speed ; when Bob, who knew as well what they were after as they did themselves, unexpectedly finished his glass and walked out. The porter followed with the ale very promptly. "Give us *hold*," cried James, in an energetic whisper. "Only let's have one pull." And he accordingly on the instant seized the pot ; but in his eagerness, not only poured a portion of the beverage over his collar and cravat, and down the bosom of his shirt, thus spoiling the respectability of his appearance altogether, but the first mouthful went "the wrong way!"—a slight accident, which made him spurt and cough with unequivocal violence. "Catch hold !" said he, as soon as he had recovered the power to speak. "Here, *give us the change—quick !*" when straining to keep down his cough as the hot water streamed from his eyes, he continued to follow Bob, who highly enjoyed it.

This alone was enough for a man like James, but when he had sufficiently recovered himself to see his way with distinctness, a feeling of horror crept over him on perceiving that Bob was still going *from* Richmond.

"Why, what—why—why—where is she off to *now* !" he exclaimed, as they passed over the bridge. "If this isn't a comfort, I don't know what is. Who *would* be a servant ? But never mind, *she'll* soon give in, for all she has had a glass of brandy and water. I wonder she ain't beastly ; but they'll smell my lady ; they're safe to find her out when she gets home ; that's one consolation, anyhow. But let's just see now, how far she *will* go. I'll warrant I'll keep it up as long as she can. Let her walk on. Who cares ? Let's just see, now, who'll be the first to give in."

Unconscious of this manly challenge, Bob still pursued his course; but the spirit of the challenger was quickly subdued.

"Where can she be going?" he exclaimed in despair. "It is all very fine, but—Well," he continued, clutching a newly-created hope with surpassing promptitude and tightness, "she must ride back; that's quite clear."

This hope was, however, strangled in its earliest infancy, for Bob at that moment turned into Bushy Park, which, in the judgment of James, was more monstrous than all, for he happened to know the extent of that park, and Bob walked about as leisurely as if he had not been then more than a hundred yards from home. He kept to no particular path, but wandered here and there, as his fickle fancy happened to change. He at one time got very near the Hampton-Court gate, but he turned back, and walked round and round the park again, until James worked himself into such a state of mental excitement that he absolutely made up his mind to do something.

"I *will* speak! I'll speak, if I lose my place!" he cried firmly. "They can't be off giving me a character." And he cleared his throat desperately, and shook his head with a reckless air, and said to Bob boldly, "If you please, Miss, it's getting very late."

"Fellor!" cried Bob, in a tone of virtuous indignation. "How dare you address a lady, fellor? What do you mean, sir, by follerin' of me?"

James stood aghast! It was *not* his young mistress! Really his state of mind became dreadful, as the conviction flashed vividly across his active brain that he had been following a strange lady; he felt in fact perfectly paralysed.

"I—I—I beg pardon, ma'am," he eventually muttered; "but it's quite a mistake."

"A mistake," cried Bob, "you imperent fellor, you! For two pins I'd give you in charge for a nuisance."

Bob said no more. He felt that he had said quite enough, and therefore tossing his head with superb *hautour*, left James in a state of bewilderment so absolute that the whole of his intellectual functions appeared to be deranged.

"Well," said he, when his faculties were a little restored, "here's a go! Here have I been the whole of this here blessed morning a-following and a-following that creature there miles after miles, like a fool; and when all comes to all, it ain't her! Why, when I tell 'em they won't believe me; I wouldn't believe myself if I wasn't myself. Sha'n't I catch it? I ought to have known it wasn't her. Is it likely that *she* could have waded through the muck all these miles? Is it

anything like anything likely? Not a bit of it! Jim, you're an ass!"

Having arrived at this highly-satisfactory conclusion, he proceeded to retrace his steps; but before he had reached the gates he suddenly conceived an idea.

"It was her cloak," said he, stopping remarkably short. "I'll take my solemn oath to the cloak."

At this moment the whole affair struck him as being most extraordinary, and, as the force with which it struck him turned his head completely round, he beheld Bob in the distance assuming a variety of inelegant and unladylike attitudes, holding his back and sides as if in laughing convulsions, and twisting, and stooping, and slapping his knees in a state of unadulterated rapture.

"She stole it! I'll lay my life she stole it!" cried James, and he instantly took upon himself the entire responsibility of running back.

Bob saw him coming, and inferred therefrom that his suspicions had been awakened; and as he had not the slightest desire to be identified, he instantly started off; but, being totally unaccustomed to run in a lady's cloak, although he had in his time jumped in a sack very cleverly, he found that it materially impeded his progress. For the first hundred yards he held it up with great success; but as it dropped while he endeavoured to adjust the veil, which annoyed him, he stepped upon it, and down he went heavily. He cared not, however, two straws about that. It was not in his nature to give in. He scrambled up again in an instant, but in doing so, tore the front breadths all to ribbons. He could do nothing at all with the little hooks and eyes; they could not be prevailed upon to separate; and hence, as James was gaining fast upon him, he at once tore the cloak completely off, and left that, with the little muff, behind him.

James now saw the figure of a man in top-boots, and became more than ever convinced that an audacious larceny had been committed. He therefore passed the abandoned muff and cloak which were lying upon the grass, with the laudable view of securing the delinquent; but as Bob now threw off his bonnet—seeing that, in the first place he could run before the wind much more swiftly without it, and being, in the second, convinced that it would be well taken care of by James, who would thereby save him a great deal of trouble,—he darted off at a speed which outstripped that of the victim, to whose view he was very soon lost among the trees.

For some considerable time James hunted about with due severity of aspect. He felt perfectly certain that he in the

tops was not far off: nor was he. Bob was up one of the chestnut trees, perched upon a branch, from which he was able to look on securely. But then James was not aware of this at all. The possibility of such a thing never entered his vivid imagination. He looked round and round the trunks with all his characteristic cunning, and flew from tree to tree like a wild individual; but the idea of looking an inch above his head never entered that head for an instant.

Under these peculiar circumstances, therefore, it will not be considered very marvellous that he failed to find Bob. That he did not approve of being baffled is a fact which at the time was abundantly obvious, for he clenched his fists desperately, and looked very severe; but as reason eventually came to his aid, he felt impressed with the conviction of its being, as a general rule, useless to look for that which there is no chance of finding, and therefore left the vicinity of the chestnut-tree, and gathered together the bonnet, muff, and cloak, with the view of taking them back as trophies to Richmond.

Bob, from his elevated position, watched him fairly out of the park, and then descended. He was, of course, inexpressibly delighted; but as he felt very hungry, he made for the nearest public-house, where he ordered a rump-steak smothered in onions. He then had another glass of brandy and water, and afterwards got the ostlers around him, and treated them with innumerable pots of half-and-half, and screws beyond all human calculation; called for songs; sang himself; proposed the health of his master and new mistress, which was drunk enthusiastically again and again; and thus, being about as happy as a prince, he laughed, smoked, drank and sang, until his head very suddenly dropped upon the table, when the kind-hearted host, in consideration of his having paid like a gentleman for what he had ordered, had him carefully carried up to bed, in a state of the most absolute oblivion.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### STANLEY'S TRIP TO GREYNA GREEN.

With all possible speed Stanley drove up to town, and on his arrival in Regent Street dashed into a yard, where he found in perfect readiness a travelling carriage, into which he at once handed Amelia from the cab.

"Pray, pray, my dear Stanley, I beseech you—pray, let me go home!" said the trembling girl, in accents the most touching, as she entered the carriage.

"My dearest!—why, surely you would not return now?"

"Oh, yes! Indeed, indeed my courage fails me. Mamma will be so dreadfully alarmed. Do let me return. You cannot tell, Stanley, how dearly I will love you—you cannot, indeed!"

"My Amelia, I believe that you love me now. You *must* not endeavour to make me feel that you do not repose in me that confidence which is the very essence of love."

Amelia sank back in the carriage, and sobbed like a child.

The horses were put to, and the female servant, whom the post-master had provided, had taken her seat on the box; all, therefore, being ready, the postilions mounted, Stanley joined Amelia, and the carriage dashed out of the yard.

For the first three stages Amelia was in tears. Stanley employed all his eloquence, which was not inconsiderable, with the view of enforcing his sophistries, which were at all times most specious, but in vain. He tried with all the power of which he was capable to wean her thoughts from home, but without any sensible effect, until vexation caused him to be gloomy and silent, when Amelia turned to cheer *him*.

"My Stanley," she cried, "why are you so dull? If you repent of this step, my love, believe me I shall be overjoyed. Let us return even now."

"Amelia, if I am hateful in your sight, if you feel that you cannot confide in my honour, I will; but if we do return, never must we see each other more. I have not repented—I feel that I never can repent; but when I see you so cold, so exclusively occupied with the consideration of the sacrifice you have made, that you cannot devote a single smile, look, word, or thought to me, I should be stone, my Amelia, if I did not feel the slight most acutely."

"Forgive me! I do not think that I have made any sacrifice—I do not indeed! But I cannot help thinking of poor dear mamma!" And fresh tears gushed forth, which she hastened to conceal. "But," she added, "you will not be dull? I know that I am weak; but you will not be angry?"

"I cannot, my love. Although you do try to vex me by being a little coward, you know that I cannot be angry with you."

"Well, well, I will summon more courage," and she again sobbed while striving to assume an air of gaiety. "I will not vex you thus, and then you will talk to me, Stanley, will you not? Yes—and then we shall be happy. I have but you now—I have no soul on earth to confide in but you! There!—now you look yourself again! You are not like my Stanley when you are dull." And she adjusted the curls which partly

concealed his fine forehead, as his face brightened into a smile.

Thus by assuming an air of coldness, and making her feel that he was jealous of her thoughts, he restored her to apparent contentment, albeit even then her heart was ready to break.

As the evening drew near, Stanley desired the servant to get inside the carriage, ostensibly in order that she might not catch cold, but in reality in consideration of Amelia, with whose delicacy he was perfectly well acquainted. During the night, however, Amelia slept but little. Her mind was on the rack, and even when she did sleep her dreams were of a nature to induce her to keep awake as much as possible. Stanley did all in his power to diminish the fatigue of the journey. He procured a pack of cards and a small table, upon which they played for hours, while the servant held the lamp; and when tired of playing, he read an amusing book aloud, told a variety of interesting anecdotes,—in short, all that a man could do he did to raise her spirits, and to prove that he had her happiness at heart.

They stopped but little on the road. Stanley placed great reliance upon the tact and dexterity of Bob, and felt certain that, even in the event of the disguise being discovered, he would not suffer his attendant to return before the evening; he was however far too good a general not to follow up the advantage he had gained, and hence he calculated not upon the probability alone, but upon the bare possibility of an accident.

At length they reached Carlisle, and Stanley felt they were then quite safe; but he would not even then stop for any refreshment, although it was 3 P.M. and they had had but a biscuit and a glass of wine since six o'clock that morning. As they had, however, but nine miles farther to go—it was of little importance; and, as Stanley was most anxious to have the ceremony over, in order that his mind might be perfectly at ease, he ordered a change as quickly as possible,—and the facility with which those worthies at Carlisle can change horses if they like, is truly astonishing,—and off they started again.

They had scarcely, however, got three miles from Carlisle when Stanley, who was continually on the look-out, saw in the distance a carriage and four dashing towards them at a speed which seemed to outstrip the wind altogether.

"What—what's that?" cried Amelia, who saw in an instant by the altered countenance of Stanley that he perceived something coming.

"Nothing—nothing but a carriage, my love. Don't be alarmed. It is probably—" At this moment he saw an

elderly person thrust his grey head out of the window, with the view of urging the postilions on. "Now, my lads," continued Stanley, "*Look* alive!—send them forward!"

One of the post-boys turned and muttered something, which was meant to intimate that the pursuers would not be permitted to catch them.

"It is my father!" cried Amelia, "it is my father!"

"No, no, my love—no! Don't be alarmed. It is, in all probability, some other happy pair who are anxious to be married before us. But we must not allow them to beat us, you know. We are ahead now, the race must be ours."

Amelia saw at a glance that he apprehended something more than that, but was silent.

Stanley now let down one of the front windows, and having mounted the seat, put his hands upon the box, in which position, being half out of the carriage, he could see both before and behind him. "Fly! fly!" he cried to the post-boys. "Away!—Where are your spurs?—we are pursued!"

The fellow who had the command of the wheelers looked round, and by a wink seemed anxious to make him understand that the old people on that road never were suffered to overtake the young ones.

Of this Stanley at that time was perfectly unconscious, although he subsequently found it to be a fact. The pursuers have indeed but little chance between Carlisle and Springfield. The post-boys—their own—know better than to allow them to overtake the fugitives; for, independently of the spirit of knight-errantry which actuates the chivalrous dogs, the principle of self-interest—seeing that they all share the profits with his Reverence—prompts them to keep at a most respectful distance in the rear. They will lash, and spur, and swear at their horses, if urged, with unexampled desperation,—flourishing their whips, and apparently digging away with their heels, and performing a variety of extraordinary equestrian antics, curbing, fretting, and fidgetting the animals, until their knees tremble again, and their nerves are so unsettled, that on a clear cold day there is no such thing as seeing through the steam which proceeds from their foaming bodies; but the lads hold it tightly to be a sharp point of honour not to suffer the pursuers to reach Springfield until the pursued have had time to get "*winded*."

Had Stanley known this at the time, it is highly correct to suppose that he would not have been quite so much astonished. He saw them cutting, and slashing, and spurring, and manoeuvring, and yet they lost ground!—which was very remarkable. Feeling, however, that they should not even then be in



time to get the ceremony comfortably over, Stanley cried, "Twenty pounds for another mile an hour!—thirty for two!"

The post-boys no sooner heard this than to work they went, whip and heel. *They* were in earnest, and therefore dashed along in style.

Just, however, as they had got within two miles of Springfield, the near wheeler struck his unhappy foot against a stone and fell, sending his rider about twenty yards a-head. The man, however, knowing how to fall, was comparatively unhurt, and was on his legs again in an instant.

"All right!" cried Stanley. "Be quick, but cool. Up with the horse, and away!"

The horse, however, could not get up,—not that he was severely injured, but because he had got one of the traces beneath him, and two of his legs above the pole.

Stanley leaped from the carriage, with the view of assisting them to unhook the trace; and while they were thus engaged, the post-boys of the pursuers were exerting all their energies in order to keep back. They checked and curbed their horses, while they appeared to lash and spur them with great severity, as they pulled them all over the road; still, being compelled to go forward at *some* pace, every moment of course brought them nearer. They tried hard, very hard to upset the carriage, by pulling it over the hillocks which stood on the roadside; but no—the carriage would not upset. Nothing could persuade it to do so—it would, in very spite of them, keep upon its wheels! They were therefore compelled, though with manifest reluctance, to overtake the fugitives before they could make a fresh start.

Stanley now rushed to the door of the carriage, bade Amelia not to be alarmed whatever might occur: and in an instant an elderly personage, backed by another much younger, approached him.

"Villain!" cried the former, "*have* I caught you at last?" And he ground his teeth furiously, and, shaking his fist in the face of Stanley, tried to force him from the door.

Stanley at the moment looked pale; but he was cool, and stood firm as a rock.

"By whose authority," said he, "do you pursue this most outrageous course?"

"Authority, scoundrel!" cried the hot old gentleman, foaming with rage to an extent which interfered with the distinctness of his articulation. "Stand aside!" And, seizing Stanley by the collar, he struck him several times with his cane, and his friend felt in a manner bound to follow his ex-

ample, when Stanley, who could not approve of this proceeding, shook them both off at once.

"Stand back!" he cried firmly. "Use no violence, and I will use none. But who are you?"

"Insolent villain!" cried the elder assailant.

"Knock him down!" exclaimed the younger.

"Touch me," cried Stanley, "at your peril!"

In an instant they both rushed upon him, and the next moment both were on the ground. The younger started up again, and Stanley again sent him down, where he remained a while to turn the matter over in his mind.

"Help! help!" shouted the elder. "My good fellows, help us! Secure him!"

"Stand off!" cried Stanley, as the post-boys approached.

"If you value your beauty, stand off!"

At this moment Stanley's men, who had just got the horse up, and made things all right for a start, rushed with much affected fury to the spot, and, without uttering a syllable, sprang at the other post-boys, who, however, seemed to understand them perfectly well, and the four fellows wrestled with great desperation, while Stanley was keeping the principals at bay.

"Get in!" cried the man who had been thrown, as he passed close to Stanley, while struggling with his opponent. "Get in, and we're off!"

The next moment Stanley sprang into the carriage, and keeping the two principals well from the door, his men at once threw their antagonists cleverly, and left them both lying in the road,—in a dreadful state of exhaustion, of course,—while they mounted their horses, and flew from the spot with a loud shout of triumph.

"Bravo! bravo!" cried Stanley. "Well done!—nobly done!—Keep them up, and stop for nothing."

As they dashed away, Stanley turned to look after his assailants. The post-boys were still on the ground, apparently writhing with the most intense species of agony. The torture they experienced appeared to be so singularly dreadful, in fact, that they had not risen when Stanley's carriage whirled out of sight.

Nor did they rise for some time after that. They had both been so dreadfully shaken!—Oh! the power to stand was out of the question altogether. Threats and bribes were alternately resorted to in vain. They roared with anguish, and rolled about the road in a state of torture; in short, it was not until their employers were about to vault into their saddles, with the view of pursuing the fugitives alone, that they felt themselves

sufficiently recovered to mount, so horribly had they been shattered; and when they did mount, they rolled over the horses so ingeniously, and performed such a variety of astonishing evolutions, that their ability to keep on at all seemed to be an absolute miracle; albeit while they did, with undoubted ingenuity, their five miles an hour, they continued to shout, as a matter of course, "We'll catch 'em now!—oh, we'll catch 'em!"

By the time they had thus fairly started, Stanley was within five hundred yards of Springfield. Poor Amelia was half dead with fright. Had either of the pursuers been her father, the probability is that she would have rushed into his arms; but, as it was, she shrank into a corner of the carriage. The voice of one of them, she was unable to recognise distinctly, but that of the other she felt sure was the voice of one of her father's most intimate friends.

The carriage now stopped at the inn, when Stanley and Amelia instantly alighted, and went into the first room they reached. Fortunately his Reverence was at the time in the house, in a state which stands midway between pure sobriety and absolute intoxication, and being invariably on the *qui vive*, he on this occasion rushed into the room, without waiting for a summons.

"I am raddy," said he, as he drew forth a book.

"That's fortunate," cried Stanley. "No time must be lost."

"What fay? What do you gi'?" inquired his Reverence.

"These matters are always sattled beforehan'."

"Do it quickly, and I'll give you twenty pounds."

"Wheugh!" cried his Reverence between a whistle and a hiss. "In a case o'thees descraption I canna do't for less than forty."

"Well forty, fellow, and begin."

"Fallow!" echoed his Reverence, who held the term to be discourteous. "Maybe I'll no do't at a'!"

"Proceed with the ceremony," cried Stanley, "or we'll go at once over to your rival."

"Weel! weel! but fallow!" cried his Reverence, who did not by any means like it; but he, notwithstanding, opened the book, and muttered very indistinctly and very hastily certain very small portions of the regular service, and having called upon Stanley and Amelia to join hands, and then to sign the marriage record, the ceremony was at an end.

His Reverence then sat down to write out the "marriage lines," of which the following is a copy:—

*"These are to certify to all whom it may concern, that Stanley Thorn and Amelia Henrietta Joliffe came before me, and declar-*

*themselves to be both single persons, and were lawfully married according to the way of the Church of England, and agreeably to the laws of the Kirk of Scotland. Given under my hand at Springfield, near Gretna Green, this day, before these witnesses."*

Here followed the signatures of his Reverence, a waiter, a chambermaid, and the servant whom Stanley had brought from town.

On handing over the "lines," the priest received the fee for which he had stipulated, and then took his leave; Stanley gave the still trembling Amelia in charge of the females, and waited the arrival of his pursuers alone.

The post boys had timed the thing admirably. Nothing could have been more correct. The very moment Amelia left the room with her attendants the carriage drove up to the door.

Stanley at once darted to the window, and as he saw the post-boys wink at each other with peculiar significance, he for the first time distinctly understood the real character of the whole arrangement.

Of course the pursuers were not long before they alighted, nor when they had alighted were they long before they entered Stanley's room.

"Oh! you shall pay dearly for this!" cried the elder of the two, shaking his cane, and looking daggers at the fugitive. "I'll make you smart for it, scoundrel."

"Who are you?" cried Stanley. "I am not to be bullied! Are you ashamed of your name? I know nothing of you."

"Villain! thief! where is my daughter?"

"Your daughter?" cried Stanley. "Your daughter? Oh! I see; a mistake. My wife is no daughter of yours."

"Liar!" exclaimed the fierce old gentleman, shaking his stick with additional violence. "I am not to be trifled with. It is my child whom you have stolen—*my* child—*my only* child, villain! and I'll have her!"

"If for a moment you will be calm, I will convince you that she is not. I am not in the habit of allowing persons to address me in this way with impunity; but I am disposed, under the circumstances, to make every allowance. Look at this—the certificate of our marriage. Stanley Thorn is my name, Amelia Joliffe was the name of my wife. Are you satisfied?"

"No: nor shall I be until I see her."

"I will consent even to that," said Stanley, and he sent for Amelia.

"And why, if what you state be correct," said the old gentleman, "why did you not explain on the road?"

"Because," replied Stanley, "you conducted yourself with so much violence."

"But of course you knew that I was not the father of the lady?"

"I did; but I did *not* know that you were not her father's friend."

Amelia now timidly entered the room, expecting, of course, to see some one who knew her.

"Have courage, my girl," said Stanley, taking her hand. "These gentlemen are perfect strangers. I sent for you simply to convince them that they have made a mistake."

"I have to apologise, madam," said the old gentleman with due politeness, "for having caused so much alarm. I am satisfied," he continued, addressing Stanley, "and I have also to apologise to you."

The apology was accepted, and the strangers left the room, with the view of making inquiries having reference to the arrival of the parties of whom they were really in pursuit.

"Pray—pray leave this place," said Amelia. "Papa may yet arrive."

"And if he should," replied Stanley, "it will be useless. He cannot sever us, my girl. You are mine now!—mine from this happy hour. We will, however, return to Carlisle after dinner, if you do not feel too much fatigued?"

"Oh, do. It is not far. I should not, indeed, like to remain here."

It was thus settled. Dinner was ordered, and in a short time produced in rather an unexpected style; but they had scarcely been seated at the table ten minutes when a dirty post-chaise and pair stopped at the door.

Stanley rushed to the window in an instant, and Amelia, notwithstanding the turn-out was wretched, quickly followed, in the full expectation of seeing her father.

Before the postboy had time to dismount, the old gentleman by whom they had been pursued, opened the door of the dirty chaise, and without the slightest unnecessary ceremony, dragged an exquisitely-dressed individual out by the heels in the most inelegant manner possible.

"Hollo!—hollo!—why, what—I say—my God!—well, *may* I—!" hastily exclaimed the individual in question, as he bumped from step to step, for he didn't understand it. The thing was quite new to him. He hadn't an idea of anything of the sort. Hence he became much confused; and before he had time to collect his faculties, a fair-haired girl—in appearance quite a child—sprang from the chaise, and rushed to the arms of the old gentleman, apparently but too happily having escaped.

Stanley threw up the window with a view to the perfect enjoyment of the scene. He saw at a glance that the "gallant gay Lothario" was anything but a gentleman, and highly relished the supremely ridiculous style in which he rose from the mud to assert his dignity as a man.

"I claim her as my wife!" he cried fiercely. "You may be her father, or you may be anybody else for what I care; I claim her unmitigatedly and decidedly as my wife, and I am strongly justifiable, accordin' to the laws of Scotland. I reckonise her before all these gentlemen," he continued, pointing with remarkable energy to the postboys, whose countenances were at the moment particularly droll, "and accordin' to the laws of Scotland a reckonition is sufficient."

"Take charge of her," said the old gentleman to his friend. "Leave this poor puppy to me."

The friend was about to lead her in, when the gallant, with due dramatic action, threw his arms round her neck with the view of recovering possession; but his lady-love cried,

"Leave me alone. Get away, you mean creature! Don't touch me. I hate you!" When, as if this were not quite sufficient for flesh and blood to bear, her father clutched his richly-figured satin stock, and inflicted upon him a most exemplary chastisement before he relinquished his hold.

"Oh!" roared the gay Lothario, whose blood began to boil. "I command satisfaction—satisfaction!" and he threw his arms about in a state of mind apparently tottering on the very verge of madness.

"Satisfaction!" exclaimed the old gentleman, with an expression of contempt. "You miserable, narrow-minded, poor, wretched fool! You—*you* run away with my daughter!"

"And, what's more, I still claim her as my wife. You're mistaken in your man. You've got the wrong pig by the year. I'm not to be flummoxed. I'll not give her up. She's my wife—my lawful wife; and I'll have her accordin' to the law of Scotland."

"The law of Scotland, you pitiful scoundrel! Attempt to follow me into the house, and I'll give you a caning so severe that you shall dream to-night of having dropped into a nest of scorpions. Put the horses in," he continued, addressing the postboys, who enjoyed the scene much; "but before you do that I'll give you five pounds to cool that fellow's head in a bucket of water."

This offer had no sooner been made than the postboys rushed at the victim, and having turned him upside down with consummate dexterity, bore him triumphantly into the yard.

"I have seen that person before," said Amelia. "If I am not much mistaken, he sold me the dress I have on."

And this proved to be the fact. He was a silkmercer's shopman, who, having a sister officiating as housemaid at a school in the vicinity of Kensington, had, through her instrumentality, obtained interviews with the object of his unalterable love, who was, of course, understood to be an immensely rich heiress, and who, having become enamoured of his slavish deportment, as well as of his chains, rings, and brooches, which were of the finest conceivable mosaic gold, had consented

without much solicitation to elope. They had scarcely, however, got clear off, when the affair became known to the mistress of the establishment, and through her to the silly girl's father, who at once posted off to the north, and was enabled to reach Gretna first, by going through Pontefract, while they went through Manchester, and by having during the whole distance four horses, while they had but two, as the mercer found that travelling was very expensive, and that the money he had borrowed for the occasion was getting rather low.

Nothing could exceed the indignation with which the gallant Lothario, when the cooling operation had been performed, ran dripping from the yard, with the postboys laughing and yelling behind him. He raved, and stamped, and looked so fiercely, and shook his fists, and threw himself into such a variety of picturesque attitudes, vowing the most heavy and inexhaustible vengeance, bawling through the window to "command an explanation," and asserting his rights according to the law of Scotland; in short, he was so dreadfully energetic, and worked himself up into such a frightful fever, that in a short time his hair became perfectly dry.

The postboys now brought round the carriage, and the persecutor-in-chief made his appearance again, with his child in one hand, and his stick in the other. Lothario placed himself before the carriage-door. He wished to argue the point calmly. He wished to show that the thing was "an out-and-out do." The old gentleman, however, pushed him aside with great violence, and having stepped into the carriage after his daughter and friend, left the cruelly ill-used individual to reflect upon his fate.

This incident somewhat raised the spirits of Amelia, who, for the first time since their departure from Richmond, allowed a smile to play upon her lips, which were promptly rewarded. Of course Stanley was too good a tactician to speak then upon any other subject than that of the disappointed mercer. Upon this he accordingly dwelt, and in the most amusing strain, until the cloth was removed, when he ordered

the carriage and four horses to be brought to the door as soon as possible.

"My love," said Amelia, when this order had been given, "let us have but a pair. We *may* meet papa; and if we should, he will not then suppose it to be us."

"Oh! we are sure, my dear, not to meet *him*; and, if we should——"

"I would not see him for worlds! If I were to see him to-day I should die."

"Well—well; as you please. The fellow shall *drive*, if you like; in which case the carriage will be supposed to be empty."

"Yes, let him, there's a dear!—let him drive."

Very well. Orders were given to this effect; and when the pecuniary matters had been arranged to the entire satisfaction of all concerned, they started for Carlisle.

The spirits of Amelia were now far more buoyant; and although they returned much more slowly than they went, they appeared to travel infinitely quicker, and were hence within view of Carlisle before they thought of being more than half way.

Just as they were about, however, to enter the town, a carriage and four came dashing towards them at the rate of nearly twenty miles an hour.

"That's papa!" cried Amelia. "It's our carriage. Stanley—Stanley! what is to be done?"

"Be calm, my love!" said Stanley,—"*be calm!*" and he coolly, but with promptitude, drew up the blinds before the carriages met; and as they passed, he saw through the little window at the back not only the Captain's carriage, but the Captain himself, urging on the postilions.

"Now, my Amelia," said Stanley, "we are safe."

"But he will follow us."

"No: they will take care of that. I have bribed them too well: besides, their interest will prompt them, if possible, to detain him."

"But that poor silly person?" suggested Amelia.

"He is not at all likely to come in contact with him."

They now reached Carlisle; and at the inn to which the horses belonged they put up for the night.



## CHAPTER IX.

## AMELIA RECEIVES HER FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF MARRIED LIFE.

ON the following morning they left Carlisle, and having stopped a day at Doncaster, a day at Grantham, and a day at Stamford, they arrived by easy stages in town within the week, and proceeded at once to the house of the widow, where Stanley had decided on remaining until other arrangements could be made.

The widow, who had received a short letter from Stanley containing a vague intimation that on his return he *might* bring home his bride, could not, and would not pretend to understand it. He had not consulted *her* on the subject, and she most acutely felt that she was the first whom he *ought* to have consulted. She would not believe it; for Stanley himself, on leaving, had told her that he was going out of town for a few days with a friend, which, when she came to reflect upon it calmly, was held to be perfectly conclusive. The very moment, however, Stanley returned and presented Amelia, her ideas on the subject expanded; and she wept—she knew not why,—yet she wept and kissed Amelia, and congratulated her warmly, and hoped that she would be happy, and gave Stanley a good character, and declared that she highly admired his choice;—still she could not but feel very deeply that, as a mother, she had privileges, natural privileges, which ought not to have been violated, and that deep feeling caused her to weep and weep again. She nevertheless bustled about, and displayed the most earnest anxiety to make matters perfectly pleasant; and although at first Amelia would have been perhaps somewhat more at ease had the widow been somewhat less fussy, she soon understood her, and felt quite at home.

Amelia's first task, on becoming composed, was to write a deeply penitential letter to her father. In the performance of this task she wished Stanley to assist her; but as they could not agree as to terms,—their views on that subject being diametrically opposed,—he gave the matter up altogether to her. She began it several times, and nearly finished it several times; it was, however, eventually completed and sent, and the Captain immediately returned it unopened.

At this Stanley neither felt nor expressed any surprise,—it was, in short, precisely what he had expected; but to Amelia it was indeed a most bitter disappointment. The roughest answer that could have been penned would have been endured with more fortitude. Having somewhat recovered from the depression it induced, Amelia wrote a long letter to her mother,

conched in terms of the strongest affection, urging every conceivable excuse for the step she had taken, without, however, exciting the belief that she felt that it ought to be excused, and got the widow to direct it. She, of course, felt quite certain of having an answer to this, and therefore waited with the utmost impatience till the following morning, when indeed a somewhat heavy letter bearing the Richmond post-mark arrived. The superscription had been written by the Captain. She kissed it, and then broke the seal with avidity. Its contents were the letter she had written to her mother, —which had been opened, the hand-writing of the widow not being known,—and the following note.—

“MADAM,  
Your husband is a villain ; and, as *you* have proved yourself unworthy of our affection, we disown you for ever.”

This was signed by both her father and her mother ; but the paper near the almost illegible signature of the latter, was blistered with tears. Amelia well knew from whose eyes they had fallen, and wept bitterly as she placed the cruel note in her bosom.

“Amelia,” said Stanley, whose attention had been firmly fixed upon her, “I do not insist upon seeing any note you may receive ; but in a matter of this description I think that you ought to conceal nothing from me.”

Amelia again burst into tears as she drew the note slowly from her bosom and said, “You had better not see it, my love.”

“Well, well, I will not. I understand ;—they speak harshly of me.” And he returned the note unopened, but extorted a promise, which almost amounted to an oath, that she would never, without his special consent, write again.

Of course Stanley’s former associates no sooner heard of his return, and the purpose for which he had been absent, than they crowded in to lavish upon him their warmest congratulations. For the first three weeks he gave a dinner almost every alternate day ; and as his guests were nearly all unmarried men, they subsequently, at various hotels, gave him dinners in return. This necessarily took him much from home ; for, although he loved Amelia, there was a charm in their society which he could not resist,—a joyous spirit which she could not inspire. She zealously strove on all occasions to convince him that she was indeed quite happy ; she strove to talk as gaily, and to smile as sweetly, as before ; but there was at her heart a silent sorrow which overshadowed all.

Having lived at the widow’s about two months, he, at the suggestion of his friends, who were perpetually rallying him

on the subject of a married man residing with her. "ma," engaged a house, which the widow magnificently furnished. When, however, this change was effected, he deserted Amelia more and more. He might even then have seen the force of that sound objection which her father had urged to their immediate union; for, as every scene of folly was new to him then, he was strongly, irresistibly seduced by its attractions; whereas had he been previously acquainted with those scenes, they would at least have lost the charm of novelty, if indeed they had not actually engendered disgust. He seemed only then to have commenced life. Three, four, and five o'clock in the morning were the hours at which he commonly returned; and when he did return, the effects of the wine he had drunk were almost invariably visible. Amelia, however, never reproached him with a word, nor even with a look of displeasure. Let him return at what hour he might, she would dry up her tears, and fly to meet him; and, having welcomed and affectionately kissed him, would endeavour to make him think that she still felt happy.

"I am late," he would sometimes say, "very late, Amelia."

"Oh, do not say a single word about it. I care not how late it is, now that you are at home."

"You imagine, I fear, that I neglect you."

"Oh, no! indeed, my Stanley, I do not. But," she would add, as the tears trickled down her cheeks, "I cannot but feel overjoyed when you return."

It was not, however, always that he was able to speak thus rationally on his return; still he avoided coming home in a state of actual intoxication, until one dreadful morning about four, when the rain had for hours been falling in torrents, while the thunder and lightning had been really terrific. On that occasion two of his most intimate associates accompanied him home, and left him the very moment they had seen him safely in; but the door had no sooner been closed than he with infinite dexterity slipped down upon the mat, where he sat, firmly resolved to suffer no one to approach him but Bob, whom, by virtue of closing one eye with great muscular energy, he was enabled to see indistinctly with the other.

Amelia rushed down in a state bordering on distraction, the awful conviction having flashed across her mind that he had been struck by the lightning.

"My Stanley!" she exclaimed, "you are injured—much injured—tell me—oh, speak!—are you not?"

"Go to bed—Meley—go—go to bed. I want something—something—to eat—something—some—eat."

As Amelia's worst fears were subdued, she thanked God.

She now saw the real state of the case, and, with the assistance of his favourite servant,—(for he would still suffer no one but Amelia and Bob to touch him,)—succeeded in getting him up stairs, when the cloth was immediately laid, and he was placed near the table.

"Bob!—you old rascal—do you hear, sir?—down upon your knees, and—pull—off—my—boots."

Amelia at this moment was standing over him weeping, and as Bob was pulling off one boot, Stanley, lifting his disengaged leg upon the table, stuck the heel of the other into a richly ornamented raised pie, when leaning back in his chair, he rested his head upon the bosom of Amelia, and thus sank at once into a sleep so profound, that the process of undressing and lifting him into bed proved quite insufficient to rouse him.

In the morning, however, Amelia felt amply repaid by the fact of his asking her simply to forgive him.

"I cannot forgive myself," said he; "I am too much ashamed of my conduct; but if you will forgive me, I will give you—I don't know how many kisses."

"I will not forgive you for any number of kisses; but I will if you will promise that you will remain at home this evening, and that you will never be so naughty again."

"But why this evening, my love? You know that Crofton gives his dinner to-day at the Tavistock. Of course I must be there; but I will leave very early."

"You really will?"

"I will indeed."

"Then on those terms, although you were a very naughty creature, I suppose I must forgive you."

At the appointed hour Stanley joined his friends at the Tavistock, and according to his promise he did leave early—unusually early—but instead of returning to Amelia, he turned into Drury Lane Theatre, with the view of seeing a popular low comedian in "a new and entirely original" farce, translated from the French, and founded upon a real English comedy, originally adapted from the German. The house on the occasion was thin—a circumstance which at that particular period was by no means unusual, and he sat in a box in the dress circle, near the proscenium, alone. The farce, however, had scarcely commenced when a fine, handsome, gentlemanlike fellow entered the box, and sat beside him. He took no apparent notice of Stanley, nor did Stanley take more than a passing notice of him. He was elegantly dressed; and although the brilliant jewellery he displayed might of itself have tended to generate the idea of foppery, there was an intelligence in his eye, and a thoughtful expression about his lips

which not only at once banished that idea, but inspired the conviction of his being altogether a superior man. For some time he appeared to be exceedingly attentive to the performance, and occasionally patted one hand with the other slightly, and cried, with a patronising air, *sotto voce*, "Bravo! bravo!"

At length, addressing Stanley, he said, apparently on the impulse of the moment, "He is an excellent actor—is he not?"

"Very clever," said Stanley,—“very clever, indeed.”

"In my judgment we have at present no actor on the stage at all comparable with him in his line."

"There is not one," said Stanley, "whom I so much admire;" and he proceeded to enlarge upon his peculiar excellencies without the least reserve.

From this fair point the stranger started other interesting topics, and with great ingenuity drew Stanley fully out by gently fanning his smouldering self-esteem, for as he prided himself, and with reason, upon the facility with which he could read the real character of a man, it was not long before he discovered the weak points of his new friend, and when he had made the discovery he assailed them with a species of flattery so ingenious that Stanley became quite charmed with his conversation, which developed, indeed, much intelligence, with an apparently profound knowledge of the world.

"Who can he be!" thought Stanley. "He is evidently some one of importance. How can I ascertain who he is?"

The stranger, as if conscious of what had been passing in Stanley's mind, now, for some time kept silent; but said as the curtain was about to fall, "Well, we may in our travels meet again."

"Nothing," said Stanley, "would give me greater pleasure."

"Which way do you walk?"

"Westward," replied Stanley.

"I shall be happy to accompany you as far as I go."

Stanley bowed, and having taken the proffered arm, they left the theatre together.

"I generally drop in here," said the stranger, on reaching the entrance of an hotel under the piazza of Covent Garden. "They give you a magnificent glass of champagne, and there is nothing I more enjoy after sitting in a hot theatre. I shall pass, however, this evening—unless, indeed, *you* are disposed to join me?"

"Oh! I have no objection," returned Stanley, "not the slightest."

The stranger at once led the way; and, having reached the coffee-room above, ordered a bottle of iced champagne, and then:

began to relate a variety of anecdotes, which could not in any case have failed to impart pleasure. Another bottle was ordered. Stanley was charmed. He had never met so splendid a fellow before; in a word, he was so entertaining, so full of wit and spirit, that it was past three before Stanley thought it was one.

"Well," said the stranger, when they had finished the second bottle, "I am sorry to make a move; but I promised to look in at my club; where, by the by, I shall be happy to introduce *you*, if you are not in haste."

"I should like it much," said Stanley; "but not to-night. It is getting very late."

"Well—well! another time. Let me see. To-morrow I dine with Chesterfield; but the next day. Have you any engagement for Friday?"

"I am not at this moment aware that I have: I think not."

"Well, come and dine with me here, then, on Friday?"

"I will. At what time?"

"Why, say seven."

This was agreed to, and the stranger wrote with a pencil, "To meet at seven," upon a card, on which was engraved, "*Colonel Palmer*," and presented it to Stanley.

He then drew out his purse, and Stanley produced his.

"No, no," said the Colonel; "this is mine. You shall pay for the next;" and, having settled the amount, they rose to quit the hotel.

"By the way," said the Colonel, as they descended the stairs, "were you ever in one of the *salons* about here?"

"No," said Stanley. "Are there many of them?"

"There used to be several; but I have not been in one of them for years. *They* were the places for those who wished to see life! What say you? Shall we step into one for five minutes?"

"It is so very late," urged Stanley.

"So it must always be to see them to advantage. But, come; now we are here, five minutes can be of no importance. They are places which every man of the world *ought* to see. I pledge you my honour I'll not stop long."

Stanley could not resist. He thought, indeed, of his promise to Amelia; but held the fact of his having broken that promise already to be a sufficient excuse for going at once with the Colonel.

They had scarcely walked three hundred yards, when they stopped at a gaily-painted door, and, having knocked, were admitted by a peculiarly ill-looking fellow, who had previously withdrawn a slide, and examined them through a hole about six inches square, with a singularly scrutinising aspect. They

then ascended a flight of gaudy gingerbread stairs, and entered a room, in which about forty persons were assembled, the majority of whom were females, dressed in a style the most attractive and superb. Several of these creatures ran up to the Colonel, with the apparent view of addressing him with the utmost familiarity, but a peculiar look from him at once repulsed them, which Stanley thought strange, although, instead of inducing the slightest suspicion, it tended to convince him still more of the superiority of the man.

"Well," said the Colonel, "we must have a glass of negus, and then we'll be off."

The negus was ordered and produced, and they seated themselves to contemplate the gay scene before them; but the moment they had done so, a finely formed girl, who appeared to be very young, and was really very handsome, came and sat beside Stanley.

"How can you be so selfish?" she playfully observed. "The idea of you two gentlemen drinking alone, when I am dying to wet my lips."

"Drink, my girl—drink!" said Stanley, passing the glass. "It is not very good."

The girl nearly finished the glass before she ventured to pronounce her unbiassed opinion. She then declared that it tasted like mahogany and water, and suggested, in addition, that if she chose, the chances were that she could get a glass nearer the mark.

"Well, do so," said Stanley, as he placed half-a-crown in her hand; "let us see the extent of your influence."

"No, no," said the Colonel; "we had better be off. Come let us have no more. I feel stupid already."

"You need have no more, you know, Colonel," said the girl, who received a withering scowl for her pains.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed Stanley, "you are recognised! Well, come, one more, and then."

The Colonel now suddenly and very unaccountably exhibited striking symptoms of intoxication. Stanley could not at all understand it. "My good fellow," said he, "why, how is this? You were very well just now."

"I have a very poor head," replied the Colonel,—"a most unfortunate head. I can scarcely stand anything at all."

The girl now returned with the negus; and having carefully put her lips to it, and said that it was different stuff altogether,—which was in reality a fact,—she gave it to Stanley, who drank of it with more than usual freedom, although it appeared to him to have a most remarkable flavour. Without, however, mentioning this (for he did not pretend to understand

much about it), he handed the glass to the Colonel, who would not touch a drop, for his symptoms of inebriety continued to increase, and he pronounced himself to be "too far gone already."

Stanley was now entertained by the female. She had a brief tale to tell of every person in the room, and succeeded in occupying his attention until his articulation became somewhat indistinct, which the Colonel no sooner perceived than he cried, "Come, finish your glass and let us be gone. I never felt so queer in my life."

Stanley himself now began to feel somewhat confused; and, as he had an unnatural thirst at the moment, he at once emptied the glass; but he had no sooner done so than the room seemed to whirl round and round with great velocity. He attempted to rise. The effort made him worse. He sank down again on the instant.

"Hollo!" cried the Colonel. "What, have you caught it too? Well, never mind, old boy! we can't laugh at each other."

From that moment Stanley became insensible.

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## CHAPTER X

### THE FIRST NIGHT OUT.

As Amelia had been led to expect Stanley at eleven, when the clock struck one she began to experience that species of painful anxiety, of which it is to be hoped men in general are ignorant, inasmuch as their ignorance of it alone can rescue them from the heavy charge of absolute cruelty. Stanley had never before forfeited his word. Whenever he had said distinctly, that he would be at home at such an hour, at that hour he had invariably returned. Still, could she have seen him then, she would have been quite content; for she chided her impatience, and conceived for him numerous excuses, and contended with herself that she ought not to expect him to run away at a moment's notice, as if indeed he were her slave; which, of course, was very amiable, and for the time being had a good effect.

Two o'clock came.—She rose and went to the piano, with the view of learning a new song; but this was a task she was utterly unable to accomplish. Although her eyes followed the notes and the words with due precision, her thoughts were of Stanley, and him alone.

The clock struck three.—This is not quite kind, thought



Amelia. But that thought was instantly checked ; she would not cherish the idea of his unkindness for a moment ; she conceived it to be unjust ; and hence, in order to banish it effectually, she opened a new and popular novel, which, however, failed to interest her. Still she kept her eyes fixed upon its pages, and tried to enter into its spirit, until the clock struck four, when she burst into tears. For the first time she felt that she was neglected, and that feeling was fraught with a terrible pang. And clearly, had she been able to ward it off much longer, she must have been either more or less than mortal. No creature ever loved with more warmth and devotion, none could ever have been more gentle, more patient, more confiding ; but let those who may be inclined to deem her suspicions of neglect either wholly unjustifiable or premature, compare her former position with that which she occupied then. But a few weeks before she was the centre of a circle of affectionate relatives and friends, the beloved of all by whom she was surrounded. All strove to anticipate her wishes, to contribute in every possible way to her happiness ; and enjoying, as she did, to the full extent their sweet society, she was happy, and buoyant, and gay. These friends, this society, this happiness, she had sacrificed for one in whom her heart of hearts had taught her to confide, but who neglected her, not, indeed, from any base desire to do so, but for want of resolution to avoid those temptations which he ought before their union to have taught himself to resist. She had now no society, no friends around her ; she had given up all for him, and he was almost continually absent. Who, then, can marvel that she experienced painful feelings ! Oh ; how much misery and vice would be averted if they who possess every blessing which parental affection can impart, with every comfort which affluence can collaterally yield, were deliberately to weigh present happiness against the prospect of realising that which is based upon hope !

"Surely," exclaimed Amelia, "something dreadful must have happened. He must have met with some very sad accident ; he must have been maimed or robbed by heartless ruffians—perhaps murdered !"

Something of a serious nature she felt sure had occurred, or he certainly would not have remained out so late. Yet what could she do ? Should she send to the hotel ? He surely could not, under the circumstances, be angry if she were to do so ! She rang the bell at once, and, on being informed that Bob was in bed, desired William to get into the first cab he met, and to hasten to the Tavistock.

"Do not," she added, "on any account send in. Simply

"Inquire if your master is there, and come back to me as quickly as possible."

The servant started, and Amelia paced the room in a state of anxiety the most intense; for since she had conceived the probability of his having been injured, that belief was each succeeding moment more and more confirmed. She opened the window, and went out on the balcony, and listened to every footstep and every vehicle that approached; but as this was a source of continual disappointment, she paced the room again, resolved to wait until the servant returned with all the patience she could summon.

At length a cab stopped at the door, when she rang the bell violently, and flew to the stairs. It was a single knock, and her heart sank within her. The door was opened, and William entered to convey the intelligence that the hotel was closed; that not a light was to be seen; and that he had rung the bell again and again without obtaining an answer.

What was to be done? A thousand new fears were conceived in an instant. She rang the bell for her maid; she could no longer bear to be alone; her mind was on the rack, and every fresh apprehension teemed with others of a character more and more appalling.

"Good Heavens! Smith, what am I to do?" she exclaimed, as her maid entered. "What is to be done?" And she again burst into tears, which for a time overwhelmed her.

"My dear, dear lady, cheer up. Don't distress yourself, pray don't. He can't be long now; he is sure to return soon."

"Oh! Smith, I fear not. I fear that some frightful accident has happened. Sit down and stay with me. If he don't soon return I shall go mad."

Smith did as she was desired; but she had not been seated long before she began to nod and breathe very hard. Amelia started up to pace the room again, but Smith was unable to keep her eyes open even for an instant; and as in a very short time her hard breathing amounted to a most displeasing snore, her mistress dismissed her to bed.

The clock struck five, and Amelia was again quite alone. Her state of mind was now frightful. Every horrible accident that could be conceived she imagined by turns had befallen Stanley. She again went to the window, and after looking out upon the darkness for some time, so excited and so nervous that the motion of a mouse would have alarmed her, she was about to return to the fire, when she was startled by the sound of a harsh cracked voice upon the stairs. Her blood chilled, and she became motionless; she listened, and trembled vio-

lently as she listened ; it was some man singing ! The tune changed, and the tones became nearer and more harsh, and she distinctly heard the words,

“ Oh, the roses is red, and the wiolets is blue,  
And the type of infection's the dove ;  
But then neither doves, roses, nor wiolets won't do  
For to match with the gal wot I lo-o-o-o-ove,  
For to match with the gal wot I love.”

Who was it ? Whom on earth could it be ? Some burglar, perhaps, whom drink had made reckless ? She was about to dart from the window to the bell, with the view of summoning assistance ; but as at the moment she heard the handle of the door turn, she flew behind the curtain in a state of mind the most dreadful that can possibly be conceived. The door opened, and she heard some one enter and walk across the room. She was half dead with fright ; she did not dare to touch the curtain ; but as she at length summoned courage sufficient to look through an opening, she saw the back of a man without his coat standing thoughtfully before the fire. She felt as if she could have sunk into the earth. Her agitation was excessive. The next moment, however, the man turned his head, and she beheld—Bob in a fit of somnambulism, with a pair of Stanley's boots in his hand ! She had heard of his being a somnambulist, but had never before seen him in that character ; and, although her apprehensions having reference to the crime of burglary vanished, she would neither make her appearance, nor allow herself with any degree of freedom to breathe.

Bob stood before the fire for a considerable time, and when he felt himself thoroughly comfortable and warm, he began again to sing the refrain touching the character of the girl whom he loved. He then placed the boots upon the rug, and his candle upon the table near the tray which had been set out for chocolate, and upon which were two peculiarly-shaped bottles, one containing maraschino, and the other curaoa, of which Stanley after chocolate was especially fond. Bob looked at these bottles for a minute or two, as if some powerful inclination had been struggling with his conscience ; but it appeared that his conscience submitted to a defeat, for he poured out a glass of maraschino and drank it. He then looked steadily at the bottle beside it, and at length helped himself to a glass of curaoa ; not indeed because he appeared to dislike the maraschino—by no means : it was manifest that his object was simply to taste both, that he might know which was fairly entitled to his preference. This point, however, he appeared

to be even then unable to decide with any degree of satisfaction to himself. He rolled his tongue over and over, and nodded, and winked, and smacked his lips with due gusto in honour of each ; and as he evidently fancied that both were particularly pleasant, he naturally felt that he should like to ascertain precisely how they relished together. Actuated by this highly laudable impulse, he poured out about half a glass of maraschino, and then filled it up to the brim with curaçoa, and having placed the two bottles exactly where he found them, he drank the delicious mixture, and, by smacking his lips louder than before, really appeared to approve of it highly. His attention was then directed to the appearance of the glass, which, by dint of zealous rubbing and breathing,—for he found the task exceedingly difficult of accomplishment, in consequence of the glutinous character of the liqueurs,—he eventually polished with the blue cotton kerchief he wore round his neck ; when, having tied that little article on again with care, he re-established the glass upside down in the proper spot, took up his light, and walked from the room with all the deliberate dignity in his nature.

Amelia now quitted her place of concealment, and sank into a chair in a state of exhaustion. It was six o'clock. Her thoughts reverted to Stanley, and as her mind came again quite fresh upon the subject, she conceived a variety of fresh fears. That which took the firmest hold was, that Stanley and her father had met the previous evening ; that of course they had quarrelled ; that a challenge had passed between them ; and that they had both kept from home, with the view of meeting each other at day-break in the field. She knew the high resolute spirit of her father ; she knew also the fiery disposition of Stanley ; and felt that, under the existing circumstances, a duel would be the inevitable result of their meeting. She then dwelt upon the probability of either her father being killed by Stanley, or Stanley being killed by her father, with an effect so terrible, that she became almost frantic.

Seven, eight, nine o'clock came ; still Stanley did not return. She rang again for the servants. She knew several of the friends with whom he had dined the previous evening, and to them she sent at once to ascertain what they knew about Stanley.

The answer in each case was, that he had left the party early in the evening alone, which had the same effect upon her as if her worst fears had been absolutely realized. She was distracted ; she knew not what to do ; nor had she a single soul near her with whom to advise.

At length she sent for a coach, and, attended by one of the servants, proceeded to the house of the widow, whom she found just sitting down to breakfast, and who became so excessively alarmed on perceiving Amelia's agitation, that she almost fainted.

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed, "what earth is the matter? What has happened to Stanley? My dear girl, what is it?"

"I cannot tell what," replied Amelia, in tears; "but I am sure that something dreadful has occurred. He has not been home all night!"

"Ho!" exclaimed the widow, between a whisper and a groan, as if the announcement had really to some extent relieved her, when, kissing Amelia affectionately, she added, "My child, we must hope for the best. Let us hope that he is at home even now. I'll go with you at once. Depend upon it, my love, you will find him when you return."

They therefore immediately started, and on the way it was evident that the widow had something in her more experienced head, of which Amelia had happily no conception. She was not, however, without her apprehensions, although they were neither so lively nor so terrible as those of Amelia, until she was informed of the assumed probability of Stanley and Captain Jolliffe having met, quarrelled, and fought, when her alarm became, if possible, more frightfully intense than even that of Amelia herself.

"Gracious!" she cried, raising her hands, and assuming an expression of horror. "And is your father bloodthirsty, my love?"

"Oh, dear me, no! quite the reverse!"

"But has he been accustomed to shooting, my dear?"

"He is a soldier," returned Amelia.

"I see it all! I see it all! My Stanley is no soldier; he never had, to my knowledge, a pistol in his hand. He is sacrificed!—cruelly sacrificed! My love, send to Richmond this moment—send instantly, to ascertain whether Stanley has been heard of, and whether the Captain, your father, be at home. Send Robert; he will make the most haste."

Bob was accordingly summoned, and desired to mount his swiftest horse immediately,—to gallop to Richmond to make the necessary inquiries,—and then to gallop back with all possible despatch.

"Fly! fly!" cried the widow; "stop for nothing! The very life of your master may depend upon your speed!"

Not another word was needed to put Bob upon his mettle. The very moment he heard that, he darted round to the stable,

twisted a halter into the mouth of his best horse, and having mounted, dashed out of the yard as he was.

"Oh! these duels!—these duels!—these duels!" exclaimed the widow. "He is murdered, my love!—I am sure of it."

"*Hush!*" cried Amelia, darting wildly to the window, as a coach at the moment drew up to the door. The widow followed. The coachman slowly descended from his box, and knocked loudly. Amelia could not breathe, her anxiety was so intense: but when, on the door being opened, she saw Stanley alight, she clasped her hands fervently, and falling upon her knees, mentally offered up a thanksgiving.

Before she had risen Stanley rushed into the room, and, having caught her in his arms, kissed her ardently, while she, sobbing aloud, and elinging fondly to him, passed her hand over his pale, cold brow, as if to be sure that it was he who embraced her. Seeing her distress, and knowing what she must have suffered, for the first time since he was an infant Stanley shed tears. For some moments neither could speak. He held his hand to his mother, who was at the time giving vent to her feelings very loudly, and kissed her; and then sank upon the sofa, with Amelia still clinging to his neck.

"My love—my dearest love!" said Amelia, at length, faintly, "you look ill—very ill. I much fear even now that something dreadful has occurred."

"No—no, my sweet girl; nothing—nothing of importance."

"Tell me," said Amelia anxiously, "that nothing serious has happened, and I shall feel as if in heaven!"

"Nothing serious *has* happened, I assure you upon my honour."

"Are you sure—quite sure," said the widow, "that you have not been engaged in a duel?"

"A duel!" cried Stanley. "How came you to think of a duel?"

"Oh, we have had a thousand thoughts!" said Amelia. "We have been tortured with a thousand apprehensions. But, my love, you are faint. Come, draw near the fire. You look very—very pale."

"I will just step into my room for one moment, and then we will sit down together, that I may give you a full explanation."

This, however, he had no intention of doing; nor could he have done so had he even felt disposed, for he had been in a state of insensibility from half-past three that morning until ten, when he found himself in a station-house, lying on a board before the fire, and surrounded by a number of policemen,

from whom he ascertained that he was discovered in Covent Garden Market about five, fast asleep on a pile of carrots, with his pockets turned completely inside out. He was also informed that as he looked very ill, the inspector, instead of placing him in a cell, had allowed him to lie near the fire, and that he would have to go at eleven before the magistrate, as a purely official matter, of course. On hearing this he rose, and sent at once for a friend, but felt particularly queer; and, on making his appearance at the appointed hour before the magistrate, he was fined "five shillings for being drunk," and discharged. He had no knowledge whatever of the way in which he had been robbed. The value of his watch was about fifty guineas, and he had in his purse between twenty and thirty pounds. For his loss he cared but little; his chief object was to invent a specious tale to tell Amelia; and that object he had scarcely accomplished when he returned to the room.

"Well," said the widow, when they had been sitting for some time, "and what was it after all that caused your absence?"

"The thing is soon explained," replied Stanley,—"very soon. The fact is, I was coming home early, according to my promise; and, being foolish enough to walk, I was attacked near the Haymarket by a mob of cowardly ruffians, by whom I was knocked down, robbed, and left insensible; in which state I presume some kind creature found me; for on awaking I perceived that I had been carried to an hotel, and placed comfortably in bed."

"Heaven bless him!" cried Amelia. "I wish to goodness we knew him, that we might thank him as he deserves. But you are hurt," she continued, starting up with the view of examining his head. "I feel sure that you are hurt, you look so dreadfully pale."

"No, indeed I am not. They simply stunned me; that was all: I feel nothing of it now."

"And what hotel did they take you to, dear?" inquired the widow, who did not by any means believe a single word of it. "What is the name of the hotel?"

"I think they call it Pequeen's. I am not quite sure, but I think it's Pequeen's. I was, however, so anxious to get home that I did not take any particular notice."

The incredulous widow deemed it prudent to press this matter no farther; at which Stanley was by no means displeased. It was the very first direct and deliberate falsehood he had ever told; and nothing could surpass the deep feeling of humiliation he at the moment experienced. It was a meanness at which his spirit revolted, and the blood rushed to his cheeks for very shame.

A servant now entered to announce the return of Bob, and Stanley, of course, inquired where he had been.

"We sent him to Richmond," said Amelia. "We feared——"

"To Richmond!" cried Stanley, with an expression of amazement, "to Richmond! Good Heavens! surely you don't mean to say that you sent him to inquire for me there!"

"I am sorry—truly sorry, if you are displeased; but really I knew not what to do. I was nearly distracted. But, indeed, it was the very last place. I sent first to inquire of every friend I could think of. I did, indeed!"

"Sent first to inquire of every friend! Then the thing is by this time all over the country! But, how *could* you think that they knew anything of me at Richmond?"

"I feared, my love, that you had met papa; that you had quarrelled; and that either he had challenged you, or you had challenged him."

"And the moment," said the widow, in continuation,—"*the very moment I heard of the probability of such a thing, I suggested that Robert should be immediately despatched to ascertain if it really were so.*"

"I suspected that it was one of your brilliant thoughts, mother," said Stanley, with considerable bitterness.

"Believe me," said Amelia, "we did everything for the best. You cannot conceive what a horrible state of mind we were in."

"Well, the thing is done," said Stanley, "and cannot be undone. Send Bob up," he continued, addressing the servant. "I would not have had it happen for five thousand pounds."

Bob, who was already at the door, now appeared in a state of steaming perspiration. He panted, and blew out his cheeks to some considerable extent, and smoothed his hair, and looked as if he had not a dry thread about him.

"Well!" said Stanley, "whom did you see?"

"I saw the Captain and Mrs. Joliffe. They had me in, sir, and said they knew nothing at all about where you was."

"Did they say nothing more?" inquired Amelia.

"No, ma'am," replied Bob; "nothing more; only the Captain said it was just what he expected, and then his lady set off crying fit to break——"

"There, leave the room!" cried Stanley, with some fierceness, which Bob, as he obeyed, thought strikingly ungrateful; for he really had done the whole four-and-twenty miles in less than an hour and a half; and he held it within himself to be questionable whether he should have done the entire distance in so short a space of time, had he known before what he knew then.



While Bob was engaged in the development of his feelings by rubbing himself dry with unparalleled severity, Stanley and Amelia were sitting in silence; for, while the former felt galled at the idea of the affair having been published so extensively, the thoughts of the latter being at Richmond, induced as usual a fit of sadness.

Stanley's reverie was, however, soon at an end, for his friends came pouring in with the view of ascertaining if they could do him any service by backing him up.

While Stanley was engaged with the last of these gentlemen, Amelia herself had a visitor—one whom she did not by any means expect, and who was announced as a lady closely veiled, who had arrived in a hackney-coach, who had refused to send up either her name or her card, and who wished to speak immediately with "Mrs. Thorn" alone.

Amelia, who was still very nervous, looked upon these indications of mystery with alarm; and the widow, who had conceived a variety of ideas having reference to Stanley's indiscretion, contended that she was the more proper person to receive the mysterious stranger. Amelia of course readily yielded, and the widow at once bustled down, in the full expectation of seeing some creature with far more boldness than virtue. She was prepared for her, however, let her be whom she might, and hence bounced into the room, with an aspect indicative of dignity on the one hand, and inflexibility on the other.

The stranger rose, and bowed slightly, and then observed that she was anxious to see Mrs. Thorn.

"My name is Thorn, said the widow.

The stranger again bowed, and then said, "Mrs. Stanley Thorn is the lady I wish to see."

"She is not quite well this morning," observed the widow.

"I am aware of it," said the stranger. "But probably you will do me the favour to state that I am a very old friend, and will not long detain her."

The widow moved, and was on the point of saying something about whom she should have the honour to announce to Mrs. Stanley, and so on; but the manner of the stranger was so ladylike and gentle that she bowed and retired, completely disarmed.

"She is rather an elderly person," said the widow on her return to Amelia. "I cannot *exactly* make her out; but at all events I think that you may see her with perfect safety."

Amelia at this moment experienced a most extraordinary sensation. She could not account for it. It might have proceeded from the painful state of nervous excitement in which

she had been kept during the night ; but she certainly never had so strange a feeling before. She however went down, although excessively agitated, and on entering the room saw her mother !

" My dear—dear mamma ! " she exclaimed, rushing into her arms. " What joy to see you here ! "

These were the only words that passed for some moments. Every feeling was merged in that of affection. Their hearts beat in unison—Nature was triumphant.

" Heaven bless you, my child !—bless you ! " sobbed the affectionate mother. " My heart is too full to allow my feelings to be expressed. " And as she spoke the tears gushed from her eyes, while Amelia, who clung to her, kissed her with heartfelt emotion.

" Oh, this is kind indeed ! " said Amelia,— " most kind. It is more than I could have expected,—much more than I deserve. " And, as at the moment she appeared to have been awakened to a sense of her position, she with downcast eyes dropped upon her knees.

" I came not to reproach you, my love ; I came not for the purpose of wounding your feelings, but simply to learn if you are treated kindly here ? "

" Oh !—yes—most kindly, " replied Amelia. " My Stanley is most affectionate. He does all in his power to promote my happiness. Indeed he is a dear good creature. I cannot sufficiently love him. "

" My child, conceal nothing from me. This morning you sent to our house. He had been out all night, and— " "

" Yes—yes ; he unfortunately met with an accident. He was knocked down by some heartless persons, who, having robbed him, left him insensible. "

" Is he then seriously injured ? "

" Thank Heaven ! " cried Amelia, " he is not ; although I am sure they have injured him more than he will admit ; he is so anxious to conceal from me everything calculated to give me the slightest pain. "

" Then in general he behaves with great kindness ? "

" Oh, invariably ! " replied Amelia. " There is nothing in his conduct of which I can complain. There is nothing, in fact, which does not deserve the warmest praise. "

" I am happy to hear it. My mind is now relieved. I much feared that it was otherwise, and therefore determined to steal away this morning, in order to ascertain from your own lips if it were so. "

" But you will not leave me yet ? "

" I must, my dear child. I must return as quickly as possible.

No one has the slightest idea of my coming. It must, moreover, be kept a profound secret still."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Amelia, in a tone which could not fail to touch the heart. "Dear—dear mamma, kiss me, and forgive me! Pray—pray, mamma, forgive me!" and again she sank imploringly upon her knees, and sobbed bitterly.

"I do, my child, forgive you. From my heart, from my soul, I forgive you."

"Bless you!—bless you!—bless you," cried Amelia, as she kissed the trembling hand of her mother passionately, and bathed it with her tears. "Then I may hope that you will endeavour to obtain for us the forgiveness of dear papa. Nothing but that is required now to perfect our happiness. You will? Dear mamma! let me beg of you—oh! let me implore you——"

Amelia at this moment was so extremely energetic that her piercing voice reached the ears of Stanley, who darted at once into the room; and, having raised her, bowed distantly to Mrs. Joliffe, and said, "Madam, Amelia is not now in a fit state to bear reproaches."

"No—no, Stanley, no!" exclaimed Amelia, "you mistake, my love. Mamma has been kind—very kind."

"I beg pardon," said Stanley. "I feel, of course, grateful for any kindness that may have been shown."

Mrs. Joliffe offered her hand, which Stanley felt but too happy to take. "I have not time now," she observed, "to say another syllable. Amelia will explain all. I must return with all possible speed. Adieu, my children! Heaven bless you both!"

"But you'll allow me to see you home!" said Stanley.

"By no means."

"Well, part of the way?"

"Yes, do, mamma, do!" said Amelia.

"Well, a very short distance. I return by the stage."

She then took an affectionate farewell of Amelia, by whom she was accompanied to the door, and, when Stanley had handed her into the coach, he ran back for a moment, and said to Amelia, "Do not wait dinner, my love; I will, if possible, go all the way."

Amelia was delighted: she looked upon a speedy reconciliation as certain; and as the coach drove from the door, she turned to shed tears of joy.

## CHAPTER XI.

## STANLEY'S INTRODUCTION TO A MODERN PANDEMONIUM.

ON reaching Piccadilly, Stanley begged so earnestly to be allowed to take the coach on at least as far as Kew, that Mrs. Joliffe opposed it only as if she really wished he would. They therefore stopped at the White Horse Cellar, and having engaged a place in the next Richmond stage, rode forward, and soon began to converse with as much freedom as if nothing of importance had happened. He had always been a most especial favourite of Mrs. Joliffe: and during their journey his conversation so charmed her that she not only began to feel by no means astonished at what had occurred, but really held it to be a pity that they should continue to be separated, and thereby deprived of each other's society.

Stanley saw that he had made a deep impression, and therefore called all his eloquence into action with the view of making it "deeper and deeper still;" and in this he so admirably succeeded, that when the stage overtook them at Kew, she shook hands with him in the warmest and most affectionate manner possible, and left, fully resolved, without any solicitation on his part, to endeavour to effect an immediate reconciliation.

Stanley now directed his thoughts to Colonel Palmer, conceiving that to be the day for which the engagement had been made; and, although he had requested Amelia not to keep the dinner waiting, expressly in order that he might meet that gentleman, it will be here quite proper to state that it was an appointment which in any event he was firmly determined to keep. He was anxious to ascertain where the Colonel had left him that morning; in whose society; at what hour: indeed, there were several little particulars connected with his adventure upon which he thought his friend might be able to throw a light.

On reaching town he therefore directed the coachman to drive to the hotel, where he found the gallant Colonel, (who had totally forgotten his engagement with Lord Chesterfield,) reading the journals of the day.

Stanley approached him unperceived, and placed his hand upon his shoulder, when the Colonel started up, really as if he had at the moment given birth to the idea of its being some individual who knew him very well. This to Stanley was inexplicable, of course; but the Colonel soon felt himself better, and they shook hands with great cordiality.

"I scarcely expected," said Stanley, "to find you here thus early."

"I should not have been here so soon," returned the Colonel, "had I not been deceived by my fool of a watch."

"That is precisely the thing of which I am destitute," said Stanley. "I have no watch to deceive me."

The Colonel, who appeared to be perfectly ignorant of the matter involved in this quiet intimation, waived that particular branch of the subject by saying, "Well, how did you get home?"

"The very point I wish to come at," said Stanley. "I know exactly how I got home; but of all that occurred between half-past three o'clock and five I am utterly unconscious."

"I never saw such a fellow in my life!" cried the Colonel. "I have known in my time many high-toned dogs, but I never happened to meet with so perfect a devil."

"Why," said Stanley, who, in accordance with the lively anticipation of the Colonel, looked upon this as an extremely high compliment, "what did I do?"

"Do! You recollect leaving the place where they gave us the vile filthy stuff they call negus?"

"No, indeed I do not."

"You do not!" cried the Colonel, with an expression of surprise, which was really very clever in its way. "Do you mean to tell me that you do not remember our walking from the room with that woman you were so sweet upon?"

"Certainly. I recollect nothing of the sort. But what occurred after that?"

"Why, the moment we were out of the place, you called a cab, which I thought very wise, of course expecting that you intended to go home at once; but the cab no sooner drew up than you insisted upon the fellow getting inside with me. You would drive. You would have the girl with you on the box. You would see us both home; for you were sure that we were much too far gone to escape mischief. Well, being at the time nearly as bad as yourself, I consented to get inside with the cabman; but you and the girl were no sooner on the box than a policeman caught hold of the horse's head, and of course checked at once the development of your skill as a tooler. To the prompt interference of that man I attribute the present unbroken condition of my neck. I had, of course, very different ideas on the subject then, while you were so excessively indignant with the policeman that you threatened him with instant annihilation. You would fight him. You would bet fifty pounds to a shilling that you would polish him off in the

space of three minutes. The man was, however, exceedingly good-natured : and, as I slipped half-a-sovereign into his hand, he walked quietly away. I then again endeavoured to persuade you to go home. But, no. *Did* I think that you were drunk ? *Could* I really entertain an idea so absurd ? Why, of course I couldn't then, as you put it so pointedly : still I endeavoured to persuade you to go home. Well, you would ; but you must first treat the cabman, and as the fellow promptly offered to point out a place, he led the way to one of the market-houses here in Covent-Garden. Well, on entering this den we found it crowded with a swarm of dirty vagabonds ; you entered at once into the spirit of the scene, and appeared to be perfectly delighted. Your attention was, in the first place, directed to a knot of noisy nymphs, who although *rather passée*, looked blooming and fair, their cheeks being duly embellished with brick-dust, while the coarse pores of all the other parts of their faces were filled up ingeniously with chalk. Having treated these ladies with raw rum all round (which caused her whom you had brought to start off in high dudgeon,) you turned to a mob of emaciated beings, who appeared to be trembling upon the brink of starvation. Their appearance was the only thing which seemed to give you no pleasure. They brightened up, however, the very moment you noticed them, and promptly asked what you were going to stand. 'What will you have ?' said you.—'A drain o' gin,' was the reply. In this they were unanimous. 'Shall I order half a pint ?' inquired one.—'Half a pint !' you exclaimed. 'Half a gallon !'—They all stared, of course ; but half a gallon was ordered, and you paid for it instantler. 'Trotters ! trotters ! trotters !' cried a fellow who had a lot of pigs' pettitoes in a basket. You asked the women if they liked those particular things ; and, as they held them to be delicious, you bought the whole stock, salt and all. Of course, they looked upon you as little less than a god ; and when you called for a dance, they got up at once a legitimate three-handed reel without music, as the man who kept the house placed his veto upon the whistling. This seemed to impart to them additional delight ; but, as they kept on swallowing the gin with remarkable constancy and freedom, they soon began to drop off like sheep that have been too long in a field of clover. On perceiving this you thought it high time to start yourself ; and having given, with a bribe, certain secret instructions to the cabman, you led the way out of the house ; but I had no sooner got into the cab, expecting, of course, that you would follow, than you closed the door with a bang, and away went the vehicle. I called upon the fellow to stop ; but no : he had received his instructions : he *would* keep on ! I

therefore sank back quite resigned to my fate, and thus we parted."

Stanley was by no means displeased with the relation of this adventure: he on the contrary laughed very heartily at various points, as if, indeed, he had really done something to be proud of. "But, how very extraordinary," he observed, "that I should not have the slightest recollection of any one of the circumstances you have named!"

"It is wonderful. I have a poor head myself when I have been drinking; but I recollect everything that happened as perfectly as if I had drunk nothing but water."

Dinner was now placed upon the table, and Stanley began to explain how he was found by the police upon the carrots; how he was taken to the station-house without a shilling in his pocket; how he was marched before the magistrate; and how he was fined.

Of course the Colonel expressed himself utterly astonished! Had he dreamt that such would have been the sequel, no cabman on earth should have driven him away. "Why, where could you have got to?" he exclaimed. "But the thing is soon accounted for. Now I come to think of it, there were two thievish, black-looking scoundrels at the bar with those women whom you treated. I have not the smallest doubt that they watched you from the house, and having plundered you, left you asleep as you state. But I really am very sorry. I am, indeed."

"Oh, it isn't of much importance," said Stanley. "The loss of my watch is the only thing I care for. But, then, it is useless to dwell upon that now. It is gone, and there's an end of it. But how I could have been such an idiot as to act as it appears I did, I cannot conceive."

The Colonel smiled, and as he had already succeeded so well in describing the scene generally, he descended to particulars, and gave an infinite variety of amusing imitations of Stanley's tone and manner when in a state of excitement, which, of course, were assumed to be faithful. Upon these he dwelt at large during dinner; and, as he felt himself bound to be as facetious as possible, he did not fail afterwards to drag into their general conversation the various hits which had had the most palpable effect.

At length Stanley displayed symptoms of a desire to leave, being most sincerely anxious to be home very early; but the Colonel no sooner perceived this anxiety than he felt it incumbent upon him to subdue it.

"Well," said he promptly, without any apparent reference to what he had perceived, "I suppose that, like myself, you

have no desire to be out late to-night. We will therefore just finish this bottle, and start."

"Upon my honour I must beg to be excused," said Stanley.

"Excused!" cried the Colonel. "My dear fellow, why?"

"Having been out all last night, I wish to be home this evening early."

"Well, you will be home early. We shall both be home early. Look at your watch," he added, smiling. "You don't mean to say that you want to turn into bed at nine!"

"No; but, upon my word, you must, under the circumstances, excuse me."

"Now that is unfair. You have made, since I saw you, another appointment."

"No, indeed I have not."

"Then how is it possible for me to excuse you? Nonsense! I must have your company this evening. Do you want to have sixteen or twenty hours' sleep to make up for the loss of eight? Pooh! you'll be in bed soon enough. I don't intend to stop more than two hours myself. You can leave, of course, just when you please."

Stanley had not explained to the Colonel that he was married; and, as he had no other sufficient cause to show why the engagement he had made should be broken, he consented to keep it with the full determination to leave at eleven precisely.

"Of course," said the Colonel, when he found that he had firmly fixed his man, "you never play?"

"At chess? or billiards?" inquired Stanley.

"They are both noble games, but I alluded more particularly to hazard."

"I have not the slightest knowledge of the game," said Stanley. "I never saw it played. I have often wished to go into one of those houses; but I never could make up my mind to go alone."

"Oh! you need not go into a common pick-pocketing gambling-house to see the game of hazard. Almost every club in London has its play-room. The Imperial has one—the club to which I belong. If you like, as we are not going to stop, we'll go up to the room at once, and thus avoid the necessity for any formal introduction?"

"I should like it much better!" said Stanley. "I have for a long time been anxious to see the game played."

"It is a game which is known to every man of the world," returned the Colonel. "But come! *tempus fugit*."

The bill was therefore ordered and discharged; and when the cab, which they had sent for, was announced, they at once started.



Stanley, however, again thought of home. He felt that he ought to return to Amelia; but, of course, he could not do so then. Still he was resolved to leave early let what might occur; and conceiving himself to be perfectly secure in the assumed strength of that resolution, he turned to dwell with pleasure upon the prospect before him.

The Colonel, on the way, seemed to be somewhat more thoughtful than usual: indeed, he scarcely opened his lips until the cab stopped at a very fair-sized house, a circumstance which seemed at once to rouse him from his reverie.

"Well, here we are," said he, as the cabman knocked at the door, which was instantly opened by a peculiar-looking porter, who appeared to be very anxious to ascertain who they were. He seemed to be satisfied, however, the moment he saw the Colonel; and, having passed through three doors, they ascended the stairs, and were ushered into a room which was lighted up brilliantly.

In the middle of this room stood a table, round which several persons were sitting, while a man who stood with a rake in hand presided over a cash-box, and several heaps of counters, which were marked "*ten pound*," "*five pound*," "*one pound*," "*half pound*," and so on. The business of this person was to rake the money and counters towards him, or to throw them to the players as occasion required, and to call "*five to three*," "*six to four*," "*six to five*," "*five to four*," or whatever the odds happened to be. Considerable sums of money changed hands every moment, and Stanley was astonished at the rapidity with which they played. His attention was, however, soon arrested by the Colonel, who introduced him to the proprietor of the "*Imperial*," whom he found to be an extremely vulgar fellow. "*Yer do me proud, sir*," said he, "*for to wisit my 'stablishment. I ope to ave the honour off seein' yer ear offen. D' yer play, sir?*"

"Upon my word I have no knowledge of the game," replied Stanley, who was rather amused with the fellow.

"It's werry heasy! There's nothink a tall hin it. Set down, sir: I'll learn yer in no time."

Stanley accordingly sat at a side-table, when the preceptor produced a pair of dice from his flaming salamander-coloured velvet waistcoat pocket, and having put them in a box, said, "*Look ear! s'pose yer call seven's the main,—there's five mains,—f'r instance, five, six, seven, hate, and nine, vich his the on'y chances: but, s'pose yer call seven's the main: werry well. Yer throw seven; vell, that's the nick vich in course vins the money. If yer throw eleven, that's the nick too, vich, in course, vins the money likewise. But, s'pose yer throws*

five ven seven's the main,—f'rinstance, there's five, yer know kater hace—vich is French,—then the hods is three to two, or six to four yer know, vich his the same ticket ven, if you throws the five ag'in, yer know, afore yer throws the seven, yer vins both the hods and the stake."

"But suppose," said Stanley, "I happen to throw two or three?"

"Vy, then in that case hit's the t' other, 'cos haces, as vell as duce haces, is crabs. But to show as there's long hods ag'in yer doin' that, if yer putt a pound down upon the haces afore yer throws, and throws haces, yer vin thirty pound; and, if yer putt a pound down on duce haces, yer then vins fifteen, 'cos there's on'y vun vay off throwing haces, vile there's two vays off throwin' duce haces, yer know."

"But what do you call crabs?"

"Vy, crabs is on'y ven yer don't vin."

"And how many are there?"

"There's four crabs to the seven,—the sisses, the haces, hand the duce haces twice; five crabs to the hate—the haces, the duce haces twice, an' the sis an' sunk twice; an' six crabs to the nine—the sisses twice, the haces, the duce haces twice, hand the sis an' sunk twice; and, in course, the five his the same as the nine, an' the six his the same as the hate."

"Then these are the chances in favour of the table?"

"Percisely! There yer 'ave the 'ole thing hat vunce! I knowed vell *you* voodent be werry long a-learnin'. There's two or three more leetle pints vich 'll come to yer as nat'ral as clockverk vile playin'. *They* calls out the hods, an' it's hall skvare ear, yer know! reg'lar hupright an' downstraight."

At this moment Stanley heard the rapid application of those opprobrious terms, "scoundrel!" "villain!" and "thief!" and, on looking round, beheld, to his utter amazement, a fine dashing fellow engaged in the process of wringing the nose of the Colonel. Of course he started up on the instant with the view of assisting his friend; but before he was able to reach him, his vile, cringing, cowardly spirit was so conspicuous that Stanley stopped short, with a feeling of disgust.

"And vort's all this?" cried Stanley's preceptor. "Vort's 'e bin arter *now*?"

"Why do you allow this contemptible blackguard to be at the table?" demanded the Colonel's fierce assailant. "How can you expect men of character and respectability to come to the house, while you harbour so consummate a scoundrel?"

"That's hall wery poss'ble," returned the proprietor, pursing his lips, and looking through his shaggy brows. "But vort his 'e bin hat?"

"Securing!—and stealing my counters."

"Vort! the old dodge agin!"

"It is false!" cried the Colonel, with a look of indignation; but he had no sooner uttered the words than his accuser turned, and seizing him by the throat, shook him violently, until, in order to escape chastisement, he sank upon the floor.

"That jist sarves yer right! Now you and me cuts it. I told yer afore I woodn't 'ave it. I guv yer fair vornin'. Vy can't yer do the thing a leetle matters like a genel'man?"

The gallant Colonel made no reply. He felt himself reduced to the most minute insignificance. The circumstance of his having his nose thus pulled was sufficiently painful *per se*; but when to this was added the acute mortification with which the fact of Stanley happening to be present at the time teemed, it appeared to be just about as much as he could bear. Had the thing been done in the dark, or even before a select party of friends, to whom his character had previously been known, although he might most unquestionably have winced, he would have cared in reality but little about it; but the idea of his importance being thus at once demolished, before the eyes of the very man whom he had conceived the most ingenious designs to plunder, really wounded his fine feelings so deeply, that he retired, with all the grace of a well-whipped spaniel, to the most remote corner of the room.

"Is it possible," thought Stanley, as he stood very calmly before the fire, having declined the affectionate invitation of his preceptor to take a few practical lessons at the table—"is it possible that a man so highly educated and accomplished can be so depraved! The accusation surely must have been false—and yet *could* any innocent or honourable man have either cringed beneath the infliction of a species of chastisement so degrading, or submitted thus to the snarling of that low vulgar dog? Do you know that man?" he inquired of the person by whom the Colonel had been assailed, and who now approached the fire.

"I know him to be one of the most pitiful villains upon town."

"Well," said Stanley, "I cannot be astonished at that, having seen what I have; but I certainly was never so much deceived. He is in the army, is he not? He styles himself colonel."

"Oh, a colonel is he now? Last week he was a major, and he *has* been a lieutenant-general. But what may his name be at present?"

"Palmer," replied Stanley.

"Ah, Palmer—Colonel Palmer—and a very good name. It

was Dashwood a few days ago ; but when I first knew him it was Berkeley."

"But what has he been?"

"Why, independently of his having been everything as a soldier, between an ensign and a general, he has been an extensive West India proprietor, heir to some extraordinary estates in Ireland, an owner of immense undiscoverable mines in the north, a Russian, Prussian, Dutch, and Spanish *chargé d'affaires*, and so on: but since he ran through the property he had left him while at Oxford, he has been what you see him now, a bonnet."

"A bonnet," said Stanley. "What is that?"

"A picker up—a jackall—a fellow whose occupation is to seduce young men into houses of play to be plundered. He picked you up—I knew it the very moment you entered."

"But surely this is not a common gambling-house?" said Stanley.

"Why, what else do you conceive it to be?"

"I understood that it was a club."

"Oh, a club! So it is—yes, they call it a club—the Imperial Club. I have not the pleasure of knowing you, nor do you know me; but as I perceive that you have had but little experience in these matters, let me tell you that it *is* what you imagined it was not."

"Well, I thought that it was strange that a club, according to my acceptance of the term, should be kept by so vulgar a man."

"Oh, they are all low-bred scamps, from the richest to the poorest. The majority are of the vilest and most degraded caste; and they engage as bonnets such men as our mutual friend the colonel, who are accomplished, prepossessing, and in many instances highly connected. I presume you know little of the game. I saw Sharp teaching you as much as he wished you to know; but allow me to give you a few private lessons."

"You are very polite," said Stanley. "I shall be happy to receive them."

"Well, then, in the first place, never play at all. Shun gaming as you would a pestilence; for although a tyro almost invariably wins at first, it is sure to involve him eventually in ruin."

"A tyro, I suppose, is *permitted* to win, for the purpose of urging him on?"

"Where they happen to be sure of him again. But it is an extraordinary fact that, in the absence of all trickery, men almost always win at first,—as if some evil spirit presided over

the game, with the view of communicating the disease; for a disease it is, and one which utter ruin cannot cure. I therefore advise you strongly not to play, if you wish to preserve any feeling of honour; for be assured that, whatever he may profess, or however anxious he may be to disguise it from himself, no habitual gambler can be a really honourable man. His sole object is to win. If he can do so fairly, it is well; but if not, he very soon becomes unscrupulous as to the means by which that object is attained. Should you ever find the temptation to play irresistible, bear in mind the few points with which I am anxious to make you acquainted; for, without any desire to induce you to entertain a high opinion of me, I may state, that I am so far from being displeased with your appearance, that I would not have allowed you to be plundered if you had played."

"Now," thought Stanley, "let me narrowly watch this man. He may be quite as designing a knave as the colonel."

"In the first place," continued the stranger, "you cannot tell whether the dice they give you to throw are fair or false—there is scarcely one man in a thousand that can. They may be loaded, or incorrectly marked: you take them up as a matter of course, play with them and lose, when you attribute the fact solely to ill luck; and hence arises in a great degree that species of superstition, which forms one of the most prominent characteristics of a gamester. Now let me explain to you how you will be able to ascertain whether dice are fair or false in a moment. Put the six and the ace together thus: then turn them until you also get the seven at the side either by the quatre trois, or the cinque deux—let us say the quatre trois. Very well; if the dice be fair, you will find the six sevens without shifting those dice; that is to say, you will find the six ace top and bottom, the quatre trois on either side, the cinq deux at the ends, and the same when you divide them; whereas if they be false, you will find, having placed the six ace at the top, trois deux at the sides, quatre and cinq at the ends,—in short, anything but the right number."

"Then there are always six sevens on a pair of fair dice?"

"There are six real sevens; but as eleven is what is professionally called the 'nick' for the main of seven, there are in reality eight nicks to that main. But remember that, unless you find the numbers precisely as I have explained to you, the dice are falsely marked. They may, however, be marked correctly, and yet be false; they may be loaded, and the only way in which the fact can be ascertained without cutting them up, is by trying to spin them. This requires some practice; but if a die will spin, it cannot be loaded; if it

be loaded, it never will spin. Spin them, therefore, and make the six sevens, and then you may be sure that the dice are fair."

"I understand," said Stanley. "As far as the marking is concerned, the thing appears to be exceedingly simply."

"It is most simple when explained; but there is not one in a hundred at the present time who knows how to do it, although thousands of pounds would be saved every night by that little knowledge alone."

"But what was that trick of the colonel's which you exposed?"

"It is called 'securing,'—a species of legerdemain which some playmen accomplish with surprising dexterity. The trick is done thus: I am the caster, and have taken the odds. I wish to throw a certain number: very well. In taking up the dice, I secure one either between the fourth and fifth finger, or between the fifth finger and the palm, and put the other into the box. I then throw, of course bringing them as near as possible to each other upon the table; and as I have taken care to have the deux, trois, or quatre of the one which I thus secured uppermost, the chances are turned in favour of my throwing the very number I happen to want."

"But can you not tell by the rattle that there is but one die in the box?"

"It can be told by an experienced ear; but such an ear only can detect it. I can tell in an instant; and whenever I discover a man resorting to the practice, I invariably expose him, as I did your friend. By the way, where did you meet with that ingenious scoundrel?"

"At the theatre," replied Stanley.

"And he brought you out thus early?"

"Oh, this was last evening."

"And what place did he take you to then? Of course you didn't leave him without being seduced somewhere?"

"No; we went to an hotel and had supper, and thence to one of those saloons in the vicinity of Covent Garden."

"And did he not in any way swindle you?"

"No. In fact, he insisted upon paying for the supper and champagne."

"Of course he'd do that. Then you managed to reach home without sustaining any loss?"

"No, indeed I did not. On the contrary, I lost my watch, and every pound I had in my pocket."

"Exactly. I thought that he would never suffer you to escape."

"But this was after we had separated."

"Doubtless! Will you explain the particulars?"

Stanley did so, and was astonished to see the stranger occasionally smile and toss his head, as if he could not have understood the thing better had he actually been there.

"Will you be guided by me in this matter? Will you take my advice?" said he, when Stanley had concluded. "I can see through it all: you were hocusussed!—that negus was drugged; and, however circumstantial his description of the scene at the bar of the market-house may have been, depend upon it you never were there. The very moment you became insensible, he and the woman led you out, and having plundered you themselves, left you where you were found by the police. Now, as the only thing you care much about is your watch, and as, of course, you have no desire to make the circumstances public, take my advice: accuse this fellow at once of having robbed you; threaten loudly to call in a policeman to take him to the station-house, and then to search his lodgings; and the chances are in favour of your watch being restored."

"Good Heaven! is it possible!" cried Stanley. "But where is he?"

"I saw him leave the room about five minutes since; he is still in the house, I have no doubt. Come with me; we shall find him."

They at once left the room; and having learned from the porter below that the colonel was in the kitchen, they proceeded there *sans cérémonie*, and discovered that gentleman, in company with others connected with the establishment, before a dish of boiled tripe, tastefully fringed with immense onions.

"Colonel Palmer," said Stanley, "I wish to speak with you in private."

The colonel blushed deeply as he rose from his tripe, and became somewhat nervous; but he followed them, nevertheless, into one of the unoccupied rooms on the ground floor.

"I have reason to believe," said Stanley, on reaching this room, "that I have discovered the scoundrel who robbed me last night."

"Indeed!" cried the colonel, turning at the moment very pale. "I am very glad of it," he added, although anything indicative of gladness in his countenance no soul could have perceived,—"very, very glad indeed."

"So am I," cried Stanley; "and I therefore now call upon you to return my watch, if you value your liberty."

In an instant the colonel assumed a look of indignation; his blood became hot, and his eyes flashed fire. "Sir!" said he fiercely, as his bosom swelled with wrath, "do you mean to insinuate——"

identical pony-phæton, which he had noticed so much the day before. The same ladies were in it, and the same lightning glances were exchanged. What could they mean? They might be friends of the lady whom he had rescued! and yet, had they not glanced thus pointedly at him before that event took place? They met again and again; but, at length, having made a sign to Bob, they gave him a card to deliver to his master, and drove at once out of the Park.

Bob rode forward; but as Stanley was then at the door of his mother's carriage, and continued to ride by the side of it until they reached home, he very prudently deferred the delivery of the card until then, when he explained, of course, how, and from whom he had received it.

"Madame Poupetier!" said Stanley, as he looked at this card,— "Madame Poupetier!" It was a name of which he had never before heard. What could be the meaning of it? What could be the object of Madame Poupetier? He was engaged in conjecturing during the remainder of the day, and conceived ten thousand ideas on the subject. The thing was so unusual,—so mysterious! As a matter of courtesy, he must call upon Madame Poupetier; and as a matter of courtesy, well seasoned with curiosity, he did call the following morning.

Madame Poupetier was at home; and, from the manner of the servant it was clear that she expected him, for he was shown at once into a room which was ornamented with singular elegance and taste, and which he could not help admiring while the servant went up with his card.

In due time the lady appeared; and, having taken Stanley by the hand, she gave him at once a most fascinating smile, and they sat on the sofa together. It was plain that she had been a most splendid woman; for, although she was at that period *passée*, traces of beauty still remained of a character unusually striking.

"I feel honoured by this visit," she observed, with a slight foreign accent, "but indeed you must forgive me for having had recourse to the means by which it was procured."

Stanley bowed, without replying; for the fact is, he did not exactly understand it even then; besides he felt at the time in some slight degree confused, which Madame Poupetier in an instant perceived, and therefore drew somewhat nearer, and took his hand again, and having pressed it, continued to hold it in hers.

"This is rather warm!" thought Stanley, as she looked into his eyes as if she then felt quite happy. "I suppose that I shall presently know what it means."

Madame Poupetier at this moment of interest drew nearer



still, and then resumed, "The fact of my having sent my card to a gentleman to whom I never had the pleasure of being introduced, must, I am aware, appear strange; but when I explain that I was impelled to that course by a lady who is dying to impart to you something of importance, I feel sure that you will pardon me."

"I beg," said Stanley, "that you will not name it. I am happy, without reference to the means, in having become acquainted with Madame Poupetier."

Madame bowed and smiled, and pressed his hand again, and drew so closely to him then, that she absolutely fixed him in a corner.

"Have I the pleasure to know the lady of whom you speak?" inquired Stanley.

"I believe not," said Madame Poupetier.

"Have I never seen her?"

"It is the lady who was with me in my phaeton yesterday."

"Oh, indeed! and the day before?"

"Yes: she is a dear, good, affectionate girl; and I love her so much, that I consented to resort to the only means available of letting you know that she had something to communicate."

"Indeed you are very polite. I shall be happy to receive any communication from that lady. But—pardon my curiosity—do you know at all the nature of that communication?"

"Why," said Madame Poupetier, who smiled, and shook her head playfully, "I *do* know: but Isabelle would scold me if I were to explain."

"Then I will not by any means urge you. When shall I have the pleasure of being introduced?"

"Isabelle is very anxious for it to be as soon as possible; but matters of this description are managed with more pleasure to both parties without the formality of a set conversation. I have therefore undertaken to solicit the favour of your company to-morrow evening, when, as I am going to have a little party, all can be explained without any reserve. Will you do me the favour to join us?"

"With pleasure," replied Stanley.

"There's a good creature. Poor little Isabelle! she will be so happy! You will not be late? Say ten o'clock—do not be later than ten."

"I will not," replied Stanley, who rose to take leave.

"Then you forgive me?" said Madame Poupetier, as she smiled and rang the bell. "You are sure, quite sure that you forgive me?"

"I am delighted," returned Stanley, "as well with this

## CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH STANLEY PERFORMS A GALLANT ACTION, AND THE WIDOW IS SMITTEN AGAIN.

ALTHOUGH Amelia felt for the moment disappointed, on hearing that Stanley had not been to Richmond, she soon became reconciled when he described the pleasure evinced by Mrs. Joliffe on their way to Kew Bridge; while the fact of his having recovered his watch (which was really a miraculous fact, as he explained it), formed, in her gentle judgment, a sufficient excuse for his return being so long delayed.

Stanley was not, however, satisfied with himself. He appreciated, perhaps more highly than ever, the amiable characteristics of Amelia, and upbraided himself with neglect. He began to doubt the strength of his own resolution; and often, while reflecting, would he press his lips together, and unconsciously frown, as he fixed upon a new course of action, indicative of anything but an insensibility to the value of self-esteem, the loss of which leaves a man nothing of value to lose but his life, and of that he then soon becomes reckless. He had frequently felt that he was not all a husband should be to a wife, so affectionate and gentle as Amelia; but on this particular occasion, so determined was he to reform, that—like a drunken individual, who makes up his mind to stick to tee-total principles for a week or a month, when the probability is that he will then break loose, and become worse than ever—he resolved to devote to her society exclusively three entire days! To this resolution he adhered; and Amelia was happy, and had recourse to every means at her command of rendering that happiness mutual; but before the first day was at an end, he began to view it as an act of penance. Amelia was all he could have wished her to be; her society was pleasing—indeed, very pleasing; but the pleasure was too monotonous; the thing became irksome; the hours passed slowly, and hung heavily as they passed; still he would, with manly firmness, adhere to his resolution!—although it would perhaps have been as well if he had not.

On being released from this self-imposed punishment—for a punishment he unhappily held it to be—he proceeded to the Albany, to make his first call upon his friend, Sir William Wormwell, the person by whom the *soi-disant* Colonel had been so mercilessly exposed. He found him engaged in the pleasing occupation of perusing a number of letters from certain of his constituents, who were most sincerely anxious for him to procure for their sons and nephews appointments in the

Treasury, the Customs, the Colonies, or, in fact—not being by any means particular—in any other place within the scope of his influence, which letters he invariably answered to the effect, that he was particularly sorry the application had not been made two days earlier; but that he would, notwithstanding that unfortunate circumstance, assuredly bear the thing in mind.

His reception of Stanley was of the most cordial character. He appeared to be highly pleased to see him; and, after a long and mutually interesting conversation, Stanley prevailed upon him to promise to have a quiet domestic dinner with him and Amelia at six, when remounting his favourite horse, Marmion, he rode towards the Park.

The day was fine, and, although it was yet early, there was rather an unusual number of equipages in the ring. Of these equipages there was one which especially attracted Stanley's attention. It was an elegant phaeton, drawn by a pair of extremely beautiful white ponies, upon one of which was mounted a chubby little fellow, who might have been seven years of age, although he was quite small enough to have been taken for four. In this phaeton were two rather brilliantly dressed persons, who appeared to be mother and daughter, both of whom took particular notice of Stanley as he passed them, which notice was repeated as often as they met.

This excited his curiosity. No arms appeared upon the panel, nor was there any crest upon the harness; while the only livery of the boy was a jacket with three rows of round gilt buttons, a cap with a gold tassel, top-boots, and an infinitesimally small pair of smalls. He had therefore no means of ascertaining who they were, although he felt anxious to do so. In fact his anxiety on the subject became very intense; for they met with unusual frequency, and each time their notice became more marked.

"Well," thought Stanley, "this is singular. Who can they possibly be? I never saw them before to my knowledge, although I appear to be known to them. I wish they'd bow: I'd ride up and speak to them at once."

Inspired with a very lively hope that they would give him this little opportunity of ascertaining who they were, he turned again; but scarcely had he done so, when a lady, whose horse had taken fright, dashed past, crying aloud, "Oh, save me!—save me!"

In an instant Stanley put spurs to Marmion. "Courage, courage!" he cried. "Be silent, and you are safe."

The lady was then about twenty yards a-head; but, although the horse she rode was a fine, swift, high-spirited creature, the

beautiful Marmion, being put upon his mettle, flew over the ground in such gallant style, they were soon side by side.

"Hold firmly by the saddle," cried Stanley, "and drop the reins."

The lady did so, and he seized them in an instant, and tried to check the horse, but in vain; for as Marmion now made strong efforts to shoot a-head, he found it difficult to control even him. All he could do, therefore, was to keep them side by side in the middle of the road, and thus they dashed on until they turned round by Cumberland Gate.

At this point the lady's courage failed. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "I'm off!—my head whirls!—I can hold on no longer!—I can hold on no longer!"

"Trust to me then," cried Stanley, who, just as she was on the point of fainting, caught her firmly by the waist, when, sending his foot home in the near stirrup, and checking Marmion's speed, he drew her off; but the pommel of the saddle caught her habit, and held it. He tried to rend the robe, but could not, the whole of his strength being required to sustain his inanimate burthen, who was then in a more perilous position than before. Bob, however, fortunately came up at the moment, and having unhooked the garment, Stanley had the lady safely in his arms.

"Stop Marmion!" cried Stanley, who had not then the power to do it himself.

Bob spoke to him, and Marmion knowing the voice, at once slackened his pace, when Stanley was able to pull him up with ease. Bob then dismounted, and having received his master's burthen, who was still quite insensible, and looked pale as death, bore her manfully in his arms to the lodge, where every exertion was made with a view to her recovery.

By this time the lady's servant had providentially reached the spot, upon a mare that appeared to be about the same age as himself, which could not have been much less than sixty, and immediately afterwards a carriage drove up, containing two of the lady's relatives, when Stanley, conceiving that he could render no farther assistance, satisfied himself that the patient was recovering, remounted his horse, and rode at once through the gate.

Bob, however, did not at all approve of his immediate departure. He held it to be altogether premature. It was a proceeding to which he gave no countenance, and which, indeed, he never would have sanctioned, his private opinion being, that if his master had remained until the lady had had time to look a little about her, something like a present would have passed between her friends, in the fulness of their gratitude, and himself.

Nay, so deeply was he impressed with this conviction, that as his master remounted, he intimated, as pointedly as possible, the expediency of being permitted to take upon himself the entire responsibility of catching the lady's horse, which would have answered his purpose perhaps equally well; but as even this privilege was denied him, notwithstanding he urged that it was six to four at least against the lady's groom catching that horse in a fortnight, he thought it so particularly unhandsome and unkind, that, as the natural sweetness of his disposition began to change, he pronounced it to himself, confidentially, to be enough to make a man's blood boil.

On reaching home, Stanley found his mother, whom Amelia had prevailed upon to dine there that day, and who was therefore about to dismiss her carriage. Her spirit was perturbed. She was fidgety and absent, and indeed appeared to have been altogether put out. She had passed Mr. Ripstone that morning; and Mr. Ripstone, by bowing with peculiar politeness, had awakened those beautiful feelings which, cradled in her heart, had been sleeping so soundly and so long. She would have stopped the carriage,—she would have sent the servant after Mr. Ripstone,—she would have taken his hand with the same cordiality as before; but serious considerations, having reference to the correctness of such a course, backed by an acute recollection of what had occurred, began to struggle with her inclination, and long before the contest was decided Mr. Ripstone was out of sight. Still she felt it very strongly; it interfered to some extent with the usual regularity of her pulse, while her nerves appeared to be—nay, really were—quite unsettled. But when she heard from Stanley that she would—ay, that very day—dine with Sir William Wormwell, a Baronet, and a member of Parliament to boot!—regret was supplanted by hope, and her spirit became much more tranquil. She deemed it then singularly fortunate that she had not spoken to Mr. Ripstone; and as she proceeded home to dress,—for that was held to be, under the circumstances, absolutely indispensable,—she thought that Lady Wormwell was a remarkably euphonious name, and, moreover, one which could not be objected to even by the most fastidious. Lady Wormwell!—really it sounded very well, and would look very well on a card. Lady Wormwell—Mrs. Ripstone. No comparison could be rationally instituted between them;—the difference was very wide, and as to which name was entitled to the preference!—Well, she reached home, and having dressed irresistibly, returned to Stanley's house filled with high aspirations, and was soon introduced to Sir William. Why, what a charming person! Really his manners were very elegant!

How excessively polite ! And what beautiful eyes ! Then his figure ! It was not perhaps quite so symmetrical as that of her Stanley ; but then it was an altogether different style of figure. And then his voice ! It was a fine, manly, musical voice, and he spoke so firmly, and with so much confidence, —and yet, not unpleasantly so !—by no means ! On the contrary, it was precisely as a man ought to speak. She never could admire moustaches before !—oh ! she could not endure even the sight of them ; but then the moustaches of Sir William were such an improvement, that she marvelled they were not more generally worn. His conversation, too, was very entertaining ; while his style was extremely interesting and eloquent. In a word, her delight was unqualified until dinner was announced, when she could not resist slightly envying Amelia, he led her into the dining-room with such surpassing grace. And yet this was not as if it had been a matter of choice ! Had it been so, why, the case being different, might have engendered very different feelings. Nor was it as a matter of preference that he sat where he did. She, singularly enough, thought of this tranquillising circumstance, and the thought had a very good effect ; for, after all, of what real importance was it ? He sat immediately opposite,—their eyes could, and did, meet constantly ; and although, in taking wine with Amelia, he looked at her probably a little too long, when he took wine with *her* his look was far more expressive—indeed, so much so, that she felt in some slight degree embarrassed at the moment, which Sir William perceived, and hence addressed his conversation during dinner, not exclusively, it is true, but chiefly to her ! There was then, of course, not the smallest doubt about the matter in her mind, nor was there the smallest doubt about the matter in the mind of Sir William, who continued to be as fascinating as possible until the ladies retired.

And then, with what rapture did she applaud his companionable qualities ! He had made a very favourable impression upon Amelia, she regarded him as an exceedingly gentlemanlike person ; but the widow was in ecstasies ; and, while he and Stanley were over their wine, she thought every minute an hour at least.

At length the reunion took place ; and Stanley in due time proposed a quiet rubber, which seemed to impart pleasure to all ; and, as the widow very pointedly intimated that she should like to have the self-same party at her own house on an early day, the day was fixed, and they passed the remainder of the evening, delighted alike with each other and themselves.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## TREATS OF THE PARK, AND OF STANLEY'S MYSTERIOUS INTERVIEW WITH MADAME POUPETIER.

BUT one thing was now required to render the happiness of Amelia complete, and that was the formal forgiveness of her father. Poor Mrs. Joliffe laboured hard to effect this; but the Captain was not to be moved. He was sorry for Amelia; he was not—he could not be—angry with her: his anger was directed against Stanley alone; for, as far as her prospects of happiness were concerned, he would have been more content had she married a tradesman. He looked upon Stanley as a youth without any fixed principles,—one who had been thrown upon the world without any sufficient check upon his passions, but with the means at his command of giving perfectly full swing to them all; who had to form casual friendships, which are at all times most dangerous; who had nothing on earth to seek but pleasure; and who, while fascinated by every novelty, had the power to indulge in every vice. He therefore felt that domestic happiness would be entirely out of the question; that, as love cannot live upon itself alone long, new scenes and temptations would wean him from home, if even they failed to drag him into the gulf of dishonour. The only thought which in the slightest degree shook his resolution to avoid a formal reconciliation was this, that he might, perhaps, be able to guide Stanley; to advise him what to embrace, and what to shun. But, when he reflected upon Stanley's headstrong disposition: when he considered that any opposition on his part might have the effect of stimulating, rather than that of checking him, he soon became convinced that the only wise course he could pursue was that of holding out until the time of danger had passed, conceiving that the additional claim which Amelia—in consequence of having sacrificed all else for him—then had upon his tenderness, would, in the event of a reconciliation, no longer exist, while the vanity of Stanley might prompt him to act so as to enable him anon to exclaim with exultation. "Now what have you to say against me or my conduct? What becomes now of your baseless fears, your unworthy suspicions and guesses!" This consideration had great weight with the Captain; and, as nothing arose to outweigh it, he adhered to his resolution firmly, notwithstanding the pathetic appeals of Mrs. Joliffe, who advanced with great point that what was done could not be undone, with a variety of other arguments equally novel and strong.

Amelia, of course, had no knowledge of the Captain's real

motive. She attributed the fact of his continuing to withhold the expression of his forgiveness to anger alone, yet hoped that reflection would cause him to relent. She would have gone at once, and thrown herself imploringly at his feet : but she could not without having Stanley's consent, which she perfectly well knew she could never obtain. This necessarily made her feel sad ; and, as she appeared to be unusually depressed the day after that on which Sir William dined with them, seeing that the few pleasant hours they had passed recalled to her recollection the very many happy evenings that were associated with the home of her childhood, Stanley felt pleased when the widow, who was in the highest possible spirits, called, according to promise, to take Amelia for a drive.

As soon as they had departed he ordered his horse, and proceeded at once to the Park. It was Sunday ; and being, moreover, an excessively hot day, the appearance of the Ring was most animated and imposing.

Perhaps there is no scene in Europe that can be held to be comparable with that which the Ring in the Park presents on a fine sultry Sunday. In the Drive there are vehicles of every description, from the aristocratic curricie to the "vun oss shay." The countess, luxuriantly lounging in an almost horizontal position in her britska, is followed by the butcher in his "gin-teel drag" who (while "his missus, the vife of his buzzum," is injuring her spine by leaning over the back of the buggy, with the laudable view of doing the thing with all the luxuriant grace of the countess) is constantly looking with an expression of agony at the unexampled tightness of the bellyband, and continually making "a hobservation" to the effect that "she *will* set a leettle matter forrard, if she doesn't petickler vont to be spilt." Then comes the rouged *roué*, with the rein hooked elegantly upon his jewelled finger, and with an eye-glass stuck with surpassing dexterity between his finely pencilled brow and his blooming cheek-bone, staring on the one hand into every carriage, and smiling at every milliner that passes on the other with a kind of fascination which he conceives to be irresistible. The dowager follows, with her three devoted daughters, whom she has put up at auction to be sold to the highest bidder, and who are engaged, as a mere matter of duty, in making eyes of the most provoking caste at those gudgeons whom their ma is most anxious for them to hook. Then comes an acknowledged leader of *ton*. Every eye is upon him. Whatever he may wear of an extraordinary character, whether of shape, make or colour, is held to be the mode, which is a source of hebdomadal mortification, inasmuch as when his aspiring civic imitators fancy that they have matched him to a hair, they find



on the following Sunday that he is dressed in a style most astonishingly different. After him comes an old-fashioned phaeton, drawn by an old-fashioned horse, driven by an old-fashioned gentleman, with an old-fashioned lady behind him, guarded by an old-fashioned groom. The lady and gentleman when abroad never speak to each other by any chance. Neither has to communicate anything of which the other knows nothing: they know each other's sentiments so well that they are mutually impressed with the conviction that they need not trouble themselves to explain them. For a period of fifty years, probably, they have been man and wife, and their feelings, their prejudices, their hearts so mingle, that the death of one—come when it may, will be death to the other. Then follows the invalid, taking the air in a chariot, with all the windows up; thus inhaling the fetid atmosphere he has a thousand times exhaled, with a view to the expansion and more healthy action of his tubercled lungs. A barrister follows, riding in state to extend his practice, and calculating—with correctness too, seeing that he must be an extremely eminent person to be enabled to live in such style,—upon his airings not only keeping his carriage, but putting into his pocket an additional thousand a-year. And thus they go round and round, to see, and to be seen; flanked by equestrians from the duke to the draper, while the promenade is thronged with pedestrians of every grade; of whom the majority, however, are milliners and tailors, raising dense clouds of dust behind a row of individuals at the rails, who are engaged in usurping the functions of the Crown by conferring high honours upon persons unknown, and pitchforking people up to the peerage by wholesale. The heart of him who thus establishes himself as a fountain of honour must teem with a peculiar sort of secret satisfaction. It is highly irrational to suppose that, were it not so, he would take so deep an interest in the thing; for he is never by any chance at a loss for a title. A black-whiskered bootmaker appears: of course he is an illustrious duke. His Grace is followed by a bagman: he is some celebrated marquis. A blackleg, who, in his early youth practised as a pickpocket, follows him: he is some distinguished baronet, whose family originally came over with William the Norman in the reign of Queen Anne, when Richard the Third started over the Alps after Julius Cæsar. And this is pleasing to all concerned: it pleases him who imparts the information as well as him who receives it, while it meets the views of those upon whom the titles are conferred, and whose aim is to be taken for persons of distinction.

Stanley had not been long in the Park when he met the

"Nothing!" cried Stanley, with corresponding fierceness, "I mean to insinuate nothing. I mean to charge you distinctly with having robbed me; and, unless you restore that watch, I will instantly send for the police."

"Upon my honour I know nothing of it."

"Liar!" cried Stanley, "that base look betrays you. Have you got it about you? Is it here?"

"I will *not* be thus treated!" cried the colonel; but scarcely had he uttered the words when Stanley threw him upon his back, and drew a watch from his pocket. It was not the watch in question, nor had he any other; and as Stanley began to feel that he might have gone a little too far, he relinquished his hold.

"Vy, vort's o'clock now!" cried the stumpy proprietor, who entered the room at this moment. "Vort lin the name 'o God and Mighty his it?"

"Will you send for a policeman? Last night this scoundrel robbed me of my watch, and I'm now resolved to make him give it up."

"Give it hup!—has a matter off course. Kam, none 'o yer warment manœuvres—shell out!"

"Upon my word I have not got it. I have not, indeed."

"No, I dares to say not; ner yer don know vere it his?"

"For your own reputation, Sharp, make him restore it," said Stanley's friend. "He is a servant of yours, and you are therefore to some extent involved."

"Do me the favour to go for a policeman," said Stanley to his friend, "or watch the villain narrowly while I run myself."

"Don't, for God and Mighty's sake, bring the polis in ear! They cusses the 'spectability of hevery 'stablishment they henters. I'll bundle 'im hout neck and crop, and then yer cun give 'im hin charge. But *have* yer a-goin' for to give the ticker hup?—Kam, that's hall about it."

"I tell you again that I have not got the watch," replied the colonel; and he winked at the proprietor, conceiving that that might have a favourable effect. But in this he was mistaken; for although Sharp was quite as great a villain as himself, the subject of his own reputation had been touched, and that induced him to be for once in his life honest.

"Oh ho! I twig!" said he, the moment the wink had been given. "But no, it von't fit; no, nothink off the sort; I von't 'ave it."

This the Colonel conceived to be extremely irregular, "Honour among thieves" having been for years the recognised motto of both. He, notwithstanding, drew him aside, and

said something in a whisper, as he pulled from his pocket a dirty piece of card about an inch and a half square.

"Now, serpose," said Sharp, as he returned with this card in his hand, "serpose this ear votch is guv hup, vill yer pledge yer verd yer'll perceed no furdher?"

"I will," replied Stanley.

"Vell, then, serpose ag'in that it's pawned for ten pound, vood yer hin sich a case, yer know, be satisfied with the dub-blikit?"

Stanley would have been, but his friend interposed. "By no means," said he, "if that wretch has ten pounds in his pocket."

"'Ave yer got ten pound?" inquired Sharp.

"I have not," replied the Colonel.

"He had more than twenty pounds' worth of counters."

"That's hall werry possible; but for them, yer know, he guv' in a cheque."

"Well, give me the duplicate," said Stanley. "This is correct, of course."

"Oh, that's all reg'lar," replied Sharp. "You 'ave nothink to do but to show it."

"Now," said Stanley, addressing the Colonel, "in future keep out of my path. You will never again let me catch you within the reach of my foot if you are wise."

"An' 'e may think hisself lucky," said the virtuous proprietor, as Stanley and his friend left the room; "there ain't many as vood 'ave let 'im off so heasy. At hall ewents, he don't darken my doors ag'in. I 'ope as this ear von't perwent yer from honourin' me vith another hurly wisit. Good night to yer, gen'elmen—I vish yer good night."

They now left the house, and Stanley was about to express his thanks warmly; but his friend, whom he subsequently found to be a member of the House of Commons, would not hear a word. "You will find me in the Albany," said he, "I shall be happy to see you. You must promise to call."

The promise was given, and they parted. It was then two o'clock. Stanley therefore at once proceeded home, where Amelia was happy in the conviction that he had been dining at Richmond, and had thereby effected a reconciliation.

introduction to Madame Poupetier, as with her polite invitation."

"It will be a sort of fancy dress party," she observed; "but *you* need not come in any fancy costume. If, however, you wish to appear like the rest, I have one with which I am sure you will be pleased, although I think you cannot possibly assume a more attractive character than your own."

Stanley appreciated this flattering observation, and having acknowledged the receipt of the compliment inclosed, he gracefully took leave of Madame Poupetier, stepped into his cab, and drove off.

It was perhaps but natural that he should have deemed all this strange. The interview, instead of satisfying his curiosity, had had the effect of exciting it still more. What could be the nature of this important communication? What could it mean? Surely no lady had become desperately enamoured of him? It was very mysterious! The warm manner of Madame Poupetier, her mode of pressing his hand, and sticking so closely to him on the sofa, with other little familiarities, with which he could not feel displeased, he attributed to the fact of her being a French woman, in whom they were understood to be common civilities. This he could—or, at all events, fancied he could—well understand, but nothing more; all the rest was a mystery, which had still to be solved.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLAINS THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A PECULIAR FANCY DRESS BALL, AT WHICH STANLEY RECEIVES A HIGHLY INTERESTING COMMUNICATION.

At the appointed hour the following evening, Stanley—having explained to Amelia that, as he was going to sup with a few friends, he should not perhaps return quite so early as usual—repaired to the residence of Madame Poupetier, who received him with characteristic grace, and expressed herself highly delighted.

"Mademoiselle Mignon," said Madame Poupetier, after the first cordial greeting, "has not yet arrived; but I expect her every instant. You cannot conceive how enraptured she was when I told her that you would be here."

Stanley now, of course, perceived that Mademoiselle Mignon was the little Isabelle, and having observed that he should be equally delighted to see her, he was sent with an attendant to put on the dress she had prepared, and was then led by Ma-

dame Poupetier into a brilliantly illuminated ball-room, in which there were from thirty to forty persons assembled, of whom the majority were females, dressed in various styles, with so much elegance and taste, that each style appeared to be absolutely the most attractive. He had never before seen so much beauty. It appeared to be impossible for the passion of envy to be excited there; for although some were habited as nuns, some as sylphs, and some as peasants, while others were in Persian, Greek, and Turkish costumes, they vied with each other in personal charms so successfully, that it would have been indeed extremely difficult to point out the loveliest in the room.

As Stanley entered, eight very young and graceful creatures, who appeared to have been under the tuition of some accomplished *maitre de ballet*, were engaged in a picturesque dance, of which several gaily-attired elderly gentlemen appeared to be lost in admiration. At the upper end of the room a quadrille band was stationed, and by the side of the temporary orchestra a group of old ladies, with remarkably round, red, anti-aristocratical faces, stood discussing with surpassing volubility divers matters, in which they seemed to take the deepest possible interest. But for this particular group, which was not fairy-like in the slightest degree, the whole scene would have appeared to be one of enchantment. This reduced it at once in Stanley's view to reality; and, as an elegant *brunette* at the moment took his arm *pro tem.*, he began to notice the chief characteristics of the scene, a variety of which struck him as being most strange; but that which he held to be more extraordinary than all was the dearth, nay the almost total absence of young men. The ladies danced with each other, promenaded with each other, and chatted with each other exclusively, which Stanley conceived to be not quite correct; although it might have been reasonably inferred from their vivacity that nothing was really wanted to render their happiness complete.

He had scarcely, however, brought his mind to bear upon the cause of this singular circumstance, when Madame Poupetier re-entered the room with an exceedingly delicate beautiful *blonde*, whom she introduced to Stanley as plain Isabelle. He had never before beheld a creature so fair. Her skin was as clear and fine as that of an infant, rendering more sparkling her brilliant blue eyes, which, notwithstanding the whiteness of her lashes and brows, were peculiarly expressive; while her flaxen hair, soft and fine as silk, hung in ringlets upon a bosom comparable only to animated wax.

There could be now no longer any doubt which was the

loveliest girl in the room ; for, although she was dressed in the most simple style, she, at least in Stanley's view, eclipsed them all ; while—on recovering her self-possession, for she appeared somewhat tremulous when Stanley took her hand—she spoke in tones of surpassing sweetness.

There is probably nothing more really engaging than the simple conversation of one who has acquired a sufficient knowledge of our language to make herself just understood. Like the innocent prattle of an infant, it fixes our attention, while we are interested and amused, and almost imperceptibly inspires us with feelings which are nearly allied to those of love.

Isabelle was born and educated in France. She had been at the period of her introduction to Stanley but twelve months in England, and knew just enough of the English language to make those with whom she conversed comprehend what she meant. Stanley was therefore charmed with her conversation and gazed upon her as she spoke as he would have gazed upon a child. Indeed he regarded her but as a child, assumed a patronizing tone, smiled at everything she said, however seriously intended, and kept her hand playfully in his.

"You will dance with me, Isabelle?" said he.

"Oh ! I will be mos delight !"

"You are extremely fond of dancing, I presume?"

"Oh, yes ! I vos lof it indeed veery great."

"Well, then, we'll dance the next set."

And they did so ; and nothing could surpass the elegant ease of Isabelle, who glided through the figures like a fairy. Stanley now became more delighted with her than ever, and went through the following set, and then joined in a waltz, which he kept up with spirit, until his knees began to tremble, and he had lost the point of sight, when with great consideration he drew her arm in his, and inquired if she did not begin to feel fatigued.

"Fatigue !" she exclaimed, with surprise. "Oh non : I vill not feel fatigue till the day before to-morrow."

"Stanley believed what she meant to convey ; but as he felt fatigued himself, he confessed it, and led her to a seat, when she gaily explained to him that she had on one occasion danced "tree days effeery day, vid no daylight, no fatigue, no sleep," and he warmly applauded her spirit.

"And now, Isabelle," said he, taking advantage of a pause, "what is this highly important secret you are so anxious to communicate?"

"Oh," said Isabelle, blushing deeply, and pretending to adjust Stanley's dress, "I cannot possible tell to you now ; I am beesy."

"But, my dear girl, you may as well tell me at once."

"My dear girl!" echoed Isabelle with an expression of pleasure.

"Upon my word I beg pardon," said Stanley; "but really I am so accustomed—"

"Accustom!" interrupted Isabelle, as she turned her blue eyes full upon him—"accustom!—Oh, yes!" she continued, as her features relaxed, "you have leetle sistare—dear girl—I comprehend."

"Well, then," said Stanley, "now, keep me no longer in suspense. What is it?"

"Noting a tall beefore souper! Indeed it vos not quite possible to tell to you beefore."

Madame Poupetier now approached, and, after making a variety of observations touching matters in general, but more particularly with reference to the perfect understanding which appeared to exist between Stanley and Isabelle, she expressed a highly laudable hope that they were happy, and left them again to themselves.

"Have you known Madame Poupetier long?" inquired Stanley.

"No; not long. I vos not been in Engeland long."

"Your friends knew her, probably, before you arrived?"

"Oh no," said Isabelle, with an aspect of sadness. "My friends nevere vos know Madame Poupetier." And as she spoke the tears sprang into her eyes, which she tried, but in vain, to conceal.

Stanley changed the subject in a moment; but before Isabelle could reassume her wonted gaiety, supper was announced, to the entire satisfaction not only of the elderly gentlemen, but of the red-faced ladies, who hailed the announcement with manifest delight. They therefore at once slipped away, taking with them all who were not then engaged in the dance, save Stanley and Isabelle, who found pleasure in lingering until the conclusion of the quadrille, when they followed of course with the rest.

On entering the supper-room, Stanley found everything arranged in the most *recherché* style, and for the first time perceived that, while engaged with Isabelle, the number of gentlemen had greatly increased.

"Is that Monsieur Poupetier?" he inquired, alluding to a fine portly person who sat at the top of one of the tables.

Isabelle looked and smiled, and then replied,

"Non. Dere nevere vos be Monsieur Poupetier. Madame Poupetier vos nevere be marry."

"Indeed!" said Stanley; "I was not aware of that."

Isabelle looked and smiled again.

The champagne soon began to go round very briskly, and the guests felt, in consequence, much less restrained. They conversed with more spirit, and laughed with more freedom, and, indeed, there were several present who displayed no inconsiderable share of true wit. These, however, did not create the most laughter. The greatest amount of merriment was produced by two aged individuals who had not a tooth between them, but who, nevertheless, exhibited the chief characteristics of buffoons to such perfection that Mirth burst the barrier of Pity to roar. Not, however, content with this pleasing result of the spirited display of his genius, one of them actually kissed two nuns who sat beside him ; and Stanley conceived, as they offered no resistance, but, on the contrary, felt rather flattered than not, that he was the father of those nuns, or their uncle, or their guardian at least, until Madame Poupetier, who saw the outrage committed, exclaimed, with appropriate solemnity, "My Lord !"

The expression of the noble individual's queer countenance on being thus solemnly called to order, became so excessively droll that it induced a simultaneous burst of laughter, which, being both loud and long-continued, threw his lordship into a state of perfect rapture, the powerful development of which he managed by rolling remarkably in their sockets his two odd eyes, with which, in point of legitimate obliquity, nothing at all comparable in the annals of eyes either ancient or modern exists upon record. The only person who did not laugh at this highly-interesting exhibition was the noble lord's rival. To him the effect was wormwood. He became extremely jealous. He held it to be a monstrous monopoly, and tried to break it down ; but, although he laboured hard to eclipse the noble lord, he eventually felt himself utterly extinguished.

It may here be remarked that champagne is a wine of which ladies in general are fond : it were useless, perhaps, to dive to any depth into the cause ; but that they do love it dearly is a fact which experience has placed beyond the pale of dispute. Such being the case, then, it may, without any impropriety, be mentioned, that at this particular period of the evening that light and lively wine began to work its legitimate effects upon the elderly round-faced ladies by whom the festive board was adorned, and who entered at large into the general economy of the establishments over which they had respectively the honour to preside. This appeared to be deeply interesting to them, but not to Stanley ; still his eyes might even then have been opened had not Madame Poupetier with great adroitness suggested that the young ladies present were then at liberty to return to the ball-room, when, as this correct suggestion was



acted upon generally, Stanley and Isabelle joined them at once.

"Now, Isabelle," said Stanley, having led her to a seat, "what is this grand secret?"

Isabelle gazed at him intently for a moment, and then said, "*Est-ce encore un secret?*"

"Oui vraiment," replied Stanley; "mais parlez Anglais. Il m'est difficile—il m'est difficile—de vous faire comprendre en Français; en même temps j'admire beaucoup plus—beaucoup plus—j'admire beaucoup plus votre Anglais que votre Français."

"Vich vos be de same to me myself, but different. Still I sall try to pleasure you."

"Well, then," said Stanley. "Now what is it?"

"Vy," said Isabelle, as she played with Stanley's chain, and arranged it in various devices upon his vest, "it is—I—it is veery terrible to me to tell to you. I cannot possible."

"Why, you silly girl?"

"Vell, you sall—you sall deviner—vot you call?—guess—yes, yes, you sall guess."

"Impossible! I cannot."

"Cannot guess? Vot vill I do? You vill not be angry? Please do not be angry?"

"Angry, my dear girl! Why should I be angry? I cannot be angry with you!"

Isabelle raised her eyes, which then sparkled with pleasure; but dropped them again as she said, "Oh, it is veery shocking for me! but it vill as vell bee done at last as at fust!" when taking a deep inspiration, she added, "I lof you!" and buried her face in his bosom.

"And this is the secret," thought Stanley. "Well? I suspected as much. Now how am I to act? I must not be serious with this poor girl. I must pass it off with levity,—treat it as a jest. Isabelle," said he playfully, "let me see your eyes."

Conceiving that his object was to test her sincerity, she looked at him firmly in an instant.

"And so you really love me?"

"Oh, yes, indeed! I have veery dear great lof for you in my heart."

"Upon my honour I feel highly flattered."

"Oh, no: tere is no flatterie in vérité. Indeed I vos not a tall flatter."

"And, pray how long have I had the honour of your love?"

"Evere, from ven I did know you to see."

"Indeed ! Well, that *is* strange. But Isabelle, what is the character of your love ?"

"Te character ? I cannot tell. I nevere deed lof like this lof beefore. Oh ! it is happiness—yet it is not : it gives to me pleasure, and yet it does not : it is te supreme—it is—oh !—it is lof !"

"Now, suppose, Isabelle, that I were married."

"Marry ! oh, no, no, no ! you are not marry."

"But, if I were !"

"Vy, if you vere marry, it vill be veery terrible to me."

"Of course in such a case you would love me no more ?"

"No more ! Till evare and evare ! I vill not help it. But no, no, you are not marry a tall. I perceive by you smile you are not, vich is veery great felicity to me."

"Well, come," said Stanley, attempting to rise, "shall we dance the next set ?"

"Yes—yes," said Isabelle ; "but—you have quite forget to tell to me something."

"Indeed ! What have I forgotten ?"

"You have quite entirely forget to say you lof me."

"Well, that is indeed very wrong, is it not ?"

"But," said Isabelle after a pause, "you have nevere tell to me still !—You do *not* lof me."

"Love you ? How can I resist ? I can't but love so sweet a girl."

"But, do you lof me vid de veritable lof vich is lof—vich is true ? Ah ! vy you hesitate ? vy you not answer to me ? You are—*marry* ! Oh, tell to me if it is so ! but do not—oh, do not be cruel to say it is if it is not. Are you marry ?"

"I will not deceive you," said Stanley, "I am."

Isabelle dropped her head, and was silent. The tears flowed fast though unheeded by her, and she looked as if the answer of Stanley had been death to every hope she had cherished.

"Come, come," said he, "why are you so sad ? Because I happen to be married ? Why, I hope to see you married soon."

"Oh, nevere ! You vill nevere see Isabelle marry : you vill nevere see Isabelle more !"

"Hark ! what is that ?" exclaimed Stanley, as at the moment he heard a loud scream, followed by cries which had a thrilling effect. "Remain here, my girl. Do not be alarmed. I will return to you immediately."

Isabelle pressed his hand, and he darted from the room.

Following the sound of the voices, which now became more and more loud, he soon entered the room in which supper had

been laid, and which at that time presented a scene of a character the most lively and imposing. The tables were turned upside down; the chairs were broken; the pier-glass was starred; and the carpet was strewn with the fragments of bottles, and saturated with wine; and while those of the guests by whom the sport was enjoyed were pulling others back, and shouting "Let them alone!" the noble individual who had produced so much mirth, and his rival, whom at supper he had totally eclipsed, were mounted upon a sideboard, engaged among the glasses in the performance of a musical *pas de deux*.

Stanley at first could not get even a glance at the principal characters engaged in the scene; but having, by dint of great perseverance, broken through a kind of ring, he perceived two of the red-faced ladies devoting all their physical energies, with the view of getting as much satisfaction out of each other as possible, to the manifest delight of those by whom they were respectively backed. One of these ladies struck out like a man quite straight from the shoulder and fairly; but the other, though incomparably less scientific, did with her talons the greatest amount of execution. They were both in a state in which ladies ought never to wish to be, whether they do or do not love their lords; and being so, the highest object of each was to damage the countenance of the other as much as she comfortably could.

"Pray—pray, put an end to it,—pray!" exclaimed Madame Poupetier, with an expression of agony. "Oh, the reputation of my house!—the reputation of my house!"

Stanley, on being thus appealed to, at once interfered, but in vain.

"I'll teach her to run down my girls!" shrieked the more scientific of the two, who at the moment aimed a left-handed blow at her opponent, whose cap, though adorned with pinks, lilies, and roses, and long ears of corn, was so frightened that it flew off her head. "I'll show her the difference! I keep them like ladies, and that's more than some people do," and she aimed another blow, which had so powerful an effect upon the face of her opponent, that that lady considered it expedient to close; when, apparently with malice aforethought, she plucked off in an instant her more scientific antagonist's *coiffure*, consisting not only of a violet velvet turban, with three birds of paradise stuck up in front, but of an elegant richly-curved, highly-wrought peruke! Oh! to the delicate and strictly-private feelings of that lady this was terrible indeed,—and it may not be altogether incorrect to mention, that with her white bald head, and her round red face, thus completely unadorned, she did not look so comfortable quite as she did

before. Still, although she felt it deeply, while the other shrieked with laudable exultation, she flew at her boldly again, and caught hold of *her* hair, expecting evidently a similar result, which would have made her comparatively happy; but, albeit she tugged and tugged with becoming perseverance, she found it so excessively natural that she really began to deem herself conquered, inasmuch as she felt that she could not inflict upon the feelings of her opponent so deep a wound as that which her opponent had inflicted upon hers: so natural a fact is it that, while she cared but little about an exposure of her moral deformities, over which she had control, she could not bear the exposure of those physical defects, over which she had no control whatever; and hence, notwithstanding the enthusiastic promptings of her satellites, who really gave her every encouragement to "go in and win," she snatched from the ground her degraded *coiffure*, and rushed from the room, amid loud roars of laughter.

Stanley now began to feel convinced that some of the persons there assembled were not of the most respectable caste; but, without at all dwelling upon the importance which ought to have been attached to this conviction, he returned to the ball-room, with the view of rejoining Isabelle. He reached the couch on which he had left her: she had vanished. He inquired of those around: they knew nothing of her departure. He requested the servants to search the house, and they did search; they searched every room: she was not to be found. He remembered the last words she had uttered, and became apprehensive of her having madly rushed to self-destruction. He wished that he had not been so candid, yet felt that he could not be blamed. He inquired of Madame Poupetier; he inquired of all whom he met; he could not obtain the slightest information. He felt that during the disgraceful confusion she must have escaped unperceived, and, being firmly convinced that she was lost, he changed his dress, and left the house, with her last words ringing in his ears, "You will never see Isabelle married: you will never see Isabelle more!"

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## CHAPTER XV.

STANLEY DREAMS OF ISABELLE, WITH WHOSE NAME AMELIA  
THEREBY BECOMES ACQUAINTED.

STANLEY had no sooner left the house than it struck him that he was bound by every charitable feeling to proceed without delay to the residence of Isabelle. And yet, where did she reside? How

could he ascertain? He might perhaps from Madame Poupetier; but how extremely incorrect it would appear if he applied to her then. And if even he did apply, and the application was successful, he could not, with any appearance of propriety, call at that hour upon Isabelle; and if he did call, and found that she had reached home in safety, he of course would be unable to see her to dissuade her from any desperate act she might contemplate. And if again he found that she had not returned, what could he do then? Puzzled by the various promptings of prudence on the one hand, and inclination on the other, he walked to and fro in a state of irresolution, until a cab drew towards him, when he entered it mechanically, and at once proceeded home.

Amelia, who would never retire until he returned, had for hours been waiting most anxiously for him. She had been in tears. She had endeavoured to believe that it was wrong to be sad, and that her grief had its origin in selfishness; still she could not help grieving; the tears would continue to flow. The very moment, however, he returned she hastened to remove everything indicative of sadness, and looked cheerful and happy, and smiled with her wonted sweetness. Nor was this hypocrisy. If even it had been, it might perhaps be held to have been venial; but it was not. She did feel happy on his return; her smile of gladness was sincere; and when she flew at once to meet and to embrace him, she but obeyed the impulse of her heart.

"Have you passed a pleasant evening, my love?" she inquired.

"Yes—yes," replied Stanley; "very pleasant—considering that my Amelia was not with me."

"You wish me to believe that you do not flatter?" said Amelia, with a playful expression. "Well, well, I do believe it. Oh yes; if I did not, I should doubt your sincerity. But why are you not cheerful? I am with you now!"

"I only feel fatigued," replied Stanley, passing his hand languidly over his eyes.

"You must be, I am sure. You shall have some refreshment, and then for a long sweet sleep."

Stanley looked at Amelia, and drew a comparison between her appearance and that of Isabelle, of which the result was unhappily in favour of the latter. Isabelle was more strikingly beautiful than Amelia. It would indeed have been impossible for her to have been more gentle, more elegant, or more amiable; but her features were more regular, she possessed more beauty, which has in all cases an undue influence when the comparison is merely superficial. This result, however,

failed to make a deep impression then. The endearing fondness of Amelia, which was ever most conspicuous when his spirits were most depressed, caused him to feel that he in reality possessed a jewel which could not be too highly valued. He became therefore speedily reconciled; and, after reproaching himself for having entertained for an instant a wish that he had not been married, he returned those endearments which had been lavished upon him by Amelia, and thus rendered her perfectly happy.

On retiring to rest, the effect of the excitement of the scene he had just quitted was that of inducing immediate sleep; but the circumstances connected with what he considered the chief feature of that scene effectually prevented his sleep being calm. He was haunted by Isabelle. In imagination he saw her before him; now with a phial to her lips, then with a dagger at her heart, and anon upon the brink of a precipice, from which he tried to snatch her in vain. He seemed fixed to the earth—he could not stir. He called to her—she heeded him not. There she stood, looking more lovely than ever, in a position of imminent peril, while he had not the power to move a single step with the view of saving her from destruction. Again he called: she heard him, but shrieked, and disappeared. He felt himself fixed to the earth still; but presently a white mist arose from the gulf into which she had fallen, and when the wind had dispelled it, he saw her upon the verge of the precipice again. He now experienced the same feelings of terror as before, and again she dashed off, and again the mist restored her; yet so desperately intent upon destruction did she appear, that she dashed off again and again, but as often as she did so the mist reinstated her almost instantaneously upon the brink. She seemed unhurt; but his apprehensions for her safety were dreadful, and they increased every time she appeared. And thus throughout the night was he tortured, writhing to break his imaginary bonds, but finding himself utterly unable to move an inch towards her whom he panted to save.

In the morning, therefore, he did not feel greatly refreshed; but he rose at the usual hour, with a vivid recollection of all that he had in imagination seen, and reflected upon each circumstance as gravely as if the whole had in reality occurred. While engaged in these reflections, Amelia watched the peculiar expression of his countenance closely, and while at breakfast said, in a playful manner,

“Who is Isabelle?”

Stanley started at the question, and the blood rushed to his cheeks as he echoed, “Isabelle!”—for he thought it very strange that Amelia should put such a question at such a time

and half suspected that some kind friend had informed her of certain circumstances, of which she might as well have been kept in ignorance. "Isabelle!" he repeated. "What Isabelle?"

"Why, the Isabelle!—the little Isabelle!—the Isabelle whom you so often addressed in your sleep."

"Oh! I recollect!" cried Stanley, smiling; for he really felt very much relieved. "Isabelle!—I remember!—Of course!—I suppose I must introduce you to little Isabelle. Oh! she is such a beautiful creature, if the vision be faithful."

"The vision? But do you not know her?"

"Know her! Why, she is to be my second! The sweetest little dear you ever beheld! Such eyes!—such hair!—such ankles! And yet—no—her dress was too long; I did not see her ankles; but I am sure they are beautifully turned. And then she loves me so dearly! Oh! I must introduce you to my Isabelle!"

This Stanley thought very ingenious. Had he pretended not to know her, he conceived he might have done it with sufficient *gaucherie* to excite suspicion; but by affecting to know and to admire her, he imagined that the thing would be regarded as a jest. And he was right in his conjecture—as a jest it was regarded; for the perception of Amelia was so acute, that she felt it to be very unlikely he would make any such acknowledgment if in reality it were so. Whether ladies in general are thus deceived, while priding themselves upon this peculiar acuteness of perception, is a point which has yet to be established; it will be sufficient here to describe this as being the effect upon the mind of Amelia, who believed that Isabelle was a mere creature of the imagination, which was precisely the belief that Stanley wished to inspire. Lest, however, any slight feeling of jealousy should linger, he would not allow the matter to rest even here. He explained to her how ardently he loved Isabelle, dwelt upon the beautiful softness of her lips, lauded the luxuriance of her ringlets, described her figure as being sylph-like in the extreme; indeed he depicted so lovely a creature, and declared his passion for her in terms so warm, that Amelia at length thought it an excellent jest, and the subject became one of infinite merriment.

Breakfast, however, was no sooner at an end than Stanley's thoughts assumed a more serious character. He knew not how to act. Isabelle he believed to be a virtuous good girl, and he was therefore was most anxious for her safety. And yet, ought he to ascertain her residence and call upon her? Could he as a man, under the circumstances, justify the pursuit of such a course? She loved him—of that he felt firmly convinced; but what object could he hope to attain by calling? It might in-

crease, but could not diminish, her unhappiness; and what right had he to sport with her feelings? He was bound by every honourable principle to do nothing calculated to augment her wretchedness, and the probability was that neglect would work a cure.

In this strain he argued with himself for some time; and although he felt anxious, most anxious, to ascertain if she were safe, he eventually made up his mind not to call.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

IN WHICH THE WIDOW'S DESIGNS UPON SIR WILLIAM, AND SIR WILLIAM'S DESIGNS UPON STANLEY, ARE DEVELOPED.

This being the auspicious day appointed for her party, the widow was excessively busy all the morning; and, as her primary object was to astonish Sir William, everything dazzling in her possession was displayed in a style the most chaste and superb. She scorned, however, to depend upon the display of her wealth solely: her faith in the power of her personal charms was of an extremely high order; and hence, after having arranged the inanimate auxiliaries in the most startling manner, and given the most minute and conflicting instructions to the servants, she proceeded to embellish those personal charms, and perhaps there never was such a job! Everything calculated to add fascination to nature was put in requisition. The taste of her maid was in each particular instance repudiated. In reality the girl had no taste, and such being the afflicting state of things, the widow of course had it all her own way; and, therefore, when the whole scheme had been accomplished, she certainly did feel, and that strongly, that if in this world any lady ever looked the thing, she did! Characteristically illustrated at each grand point, and jewelled after the fashion she most approved,—“Well, really, now,” she observed, as she accosted herself familiarly, “what can be said against the appearance of Lady Wormwell!”—for however extraordinary it may appear that she should thus continue to harp upon “Lady Wormwell,” it is a fact that she felt that the title became her, and that she had been formed to do honour to the title.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that foreseeing that she might, on this particular occasion, be at her toilet a little longer than usual, she began to dress early; for no sooner had she taken the lingering look alluded to than Sir William arrived. It were folly to attempt to disguise from the world that she did at this moment feel fluttered. It was a moment of deep interest,



certainly; and yet, why should she be so tremulous? Why should her heart beat so? Why should she thus catch her breath, and turn faint? She sat down to answer these questions composedly; but, as Sir William's arrival was now officially announced, she started up, and took a deep inspiration. All her courage was required, and she promptly summoned all—directed her carriage to be sent for Stanley and Amelia, which she had deferred expressly, in order that she and Sir William might have half an hour's sweet conversation alone—took another smiling glance at her peculiarly graceful person—found matters all right and imposing—and then at once proceeded to receive Sir William, in a style which she felt his heart could not resist. What delight she expressed, what joy she depicted, may be conceived. But how droll were her sensations! She trembled like a foolish little bird! Yet how sweet is the love which a title inspires! what beautiful feelings it engenders! It is almost as pure and incorruptible as that which is solely created by wealth. Happy widow! She felt this love deeply; and hence, although she had a trembling hand, she displayed a sweet smile, and was, moreover so fussy! Sir William before conceived that she was aiming at something; but her great design now became palpable. He saw through it all; but he was not by any means displeased. On the contrary, he took it upon himself to seem flattered, and really enjoyed the thing rather than not; for although he was unmarried, and, and, being comparatively poor, had no great contempt for wealth, he had certainly not the most remote idea of entering into anything like a matrimonial alliance with the widow, albeit it must be confessed that few ladies of large dimensions could have looked more unique. But he humoured her fancy, and made her believe that he was not insensible to her charms, because, among other things, he imagined that she might be made useful, under circumstances of a pecuniary nature, the force of which few men knew much better than himself. He therefore entered into the spirit of the thing, and listened with great attention to the brilliant discourse of the fascinating widow, who was so extremely communicative, and managed to explain the precise character of her position with so much delicacy and tact, that, by the time the carriage drew up with Stanley and Amelia, he had become, unsolicited, master of the whole matter.

"You kept us waiting long enough, I hope!" cried Stanley, as he entered. "I thought that you were not going to send for us at all."

"Upon my word I beg pardon, my dear; but this watch of mine is really a very sad deceiver."

"Why wear it, then? Why not have one that will keep correct time?"

"Well, well, don't be angry, my love. I am sorry it happened. It shall not occur again."

This dialogue, short as it was, discovered to Sir William the true state of the case. He saw Stanley's influence at a glance, and at the moment conceived a project for enriching himself. This project must, however, be left for the present. It was not then, even in conception, matured; and, as there was plenty of time for its execution, he troubled himself no more about it then, but continued to converse on ephemeral topics with Amelia, (who could not help fancying, that when she entered he pressed her hand with rather remarkable warmth,) until dinner was announced.

The dinner passed off very well. It was very *recherché*, and very well managed. Sir William was Sir William to his heart's content, and nothing but smiles and good humour prevailed.

A variety of interesting subjects were touched upon slightly; but at length one arose which had reference to the moral tendency of exposing vice. The widow expressed a decided opinion, that virtue alone must be portrayed to induce a high appreciation of virtue; and Sir William, as a matter of courtesy, agreed with her, and contended, that if the vicious were unknown, their example could not be followed, which was certainly much to the point, clear and very conclusive. Stanley, however, was not content with this, and hence inquired of Sir William if he objected to the system of guarding the virtuous against the practices of the vicious.

"Decidedly not," returned Sir William. "I would guard them at every point, by placing before their eyes, constantly and exclusively, the beautiful characteristics of virtue."

"Precisely," observed the widow. "Of all guards, virtue is the strongest."

"But by simply doing that," said Stanley, without noticing the widow's remarkable observation, "I apprehend you would leave them unguarded. The inexperienced must be taught what to abhor, as well as what to admire; what to shun, as well as what to embrace. And the beauty of virtue is never so conspicuous as when contrasted with the deformity of vice."

"Teach men to be virtuous," rejoined Sir William, "and they require to know nothing of vice."

"But how are they to avoid the snares laid for them by the vicious?"

"Experience will soon enable them to do that."

"But whose experience? Their own, or the experience of

others? We cannot be secure in our own experience, and hence to the inexperienced an exposition of vice is a blessing. Our own experience cannot guide us : we must not be left to it alone. If, for example, a young and lovely creature should fall, ought we not to describe the villanous means by which her fall was accomplished, that others may avoid them? That young fallen creature was left to her own experience. Had she been permitted to profit by the experience of others, she might still have been virtuous—still pure—still the pride of her home—a blessing to her family—the solace of those whose hearts she may have broken ; but having merely her own experience to guide her, she was ensnared, and her experience must, forsooth, not be imparted to others. No ; they, in turn, must learn by their own experience too ! Society would be wrecked if the virtuous and the honourable were not constantly warned, by the experience of others, against those by whom vice and dishonour are practised. How are we to shun that of which we are unconscious? How are we to frustrate the designs of the villain, if we are kept in utter ignorance of those designs? How are the young, however exemplary and amiable, to avoid the specious, deeply-laid schemes of the seducer, if the arts of seduction are kept out of view? They must be warned ; and as they can be effectually warned only by the experience of others, the knowledge of that experience should not be withheld. It is the duty of all, whether in private conversation, in moral disquisitions, or in histories which amuse while they instruct, to portray the deformities of vice, with the view of rendering more apparent the beauties of virtue."

It certainly did not require all this to convince Sir William Wormwell, that if vice were not exposed, our social system would soon be destroyed ; but having taken the opposite side, to please the widow, he felt bound to fight her battle until she was perfectly satisfied, when—perceiving his occupation as her champion gone—he observed, with a smile, that he thought Stanley ought to have been in the Church. This acute observation was very much approved by the widow, who began to think so too ; while Amelia was delighted with her Stanley, which is not very marvellous, considering how easily affectionate and intelligent wives are by such means charmed by their husbands. All were therefore well content ; and when Sir William had covered his retreat by observing, that the grand point was to describe the career of the vicious, so that none might either sympathise with them, or wish to follow their example, the conversation turned upon the turf.

"Of course you go to Epsom?" said Sir William.

"I scarcely know," replied Stanley. "I have not even given it a thought."

"Then you have no favourite horse in the Derby?"

"I don't even know the name of any one that has been entered. In fact, my knowledge of the turf is exceedingly limited."

"In that case, I should strongly advise you to bet only with friends."

"Would it not be as well," suggested Amelia, "to abstain from betting altogether?"

"Decidedly," replied Sir William. "But men, from the highest to the lowest, who take the slightest interest in a race, will bet. The impulse is irresistible. If even they have nothing at stake, they cannot avoid wishing that a certain horse may win, and that is sufficient to prompt them to back that wish, if they happen to have any one to bet with. It is, however, folly for the inexperienced to bet with any but friends."

"But when are the races?" inquired the widow.

"Next Wednesday is the grand day."

"Oh, I should like to go dearly! I never was at a race in my life. I am sure I should enjoy it above all things. Shouldn't you, my love?"

"I should indeed," returned Amelia. "Papa took me down last year, and I was so much delighted! You can scarcely imagine what a lovely scene it is."

"Well, suppose, then, Stanley were to take us?" said the widow, who, after smiling sweetly at Sir William, added, "you, I presume, are engaged?"

"No; I have no *particular* engagement."

"Oh, it would be so delightful if you would go with us!"

"I assure you that nothing would give me greater pleasure. What say you?" he added, addressing Stanley.

"Oh! I am quite agreeable."

"There's a good creature!" cried Amelia. "We will not be the slightest trouble to you. You can have your own horses down there, as papa and Albert had, and ride about as you please."

"Exactly," said the widow. "You can send them forward, and we can all go down together in my carriage. We shall be so comfortable and so happy!"

It was accordingly thus arranged, and the remainder of the evening was spent most agreeably; but the greatest amount of delight was experienced by the widow, who then felt as certain of being Lady Wormwell as if a formal declaration had already been made. This Sir William, of course, perceived, and took especial care to give strength and depth to that feeling, con-

ceiving it to be essential to the due execution of that scheme of which the outline may as well be explained. He saw that Stanley was on the high road to ruin ; that he derived all the means he had of travelling that road from the widow ; and that her wealth would be thereby most sensibly diminished, if, indeed, it were not wholly absorbed. He therefore put it to himself whether he ought to suffer so golden an opportunity to slip. In a pecuniary sense he was not in a good position ; but he felt that he might retrieve himself by a little ingenuity, and the only question was,—Could he do it in the way proposed with honour? It was some time before he could answer this question with any degree of satisfaction to himself ; but he did so eventually thus :

“ We are the creatures of circumstances : circumstances govern all our actions. Is not therefore non-resistance venial when circumstances surround us in the shape of temptations to acts which in a strict sense partake of the character of dishonour? Besides, the means I propose to employ are means which the world calls ‘honourable,’ and none can be disgraced by the employment of those means in the eye of the world. Why, then, should not I, by those ‘honourable’ means enrich myself? If this fortune is to be lost, why should not I win it? I will : and while doing so defy the world to say that I violated in any single instance its own code of honour.”

By this ingenious species of ratiocination he tranquillised his conscience, and having laid the basis of success by appearing as amiable as possible in the eyes of the widow, who was in raptures, he left for the night.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

BOB MAKES A DISCOVERY WHICH IS CALCULATED TO BE HIGHLY ADVANTAGEOUS.

As it has been already placed on record that, in consequence of Stanley's departure from the park before the friends of the lady whom he had rescued had time to express their gratitude, Bob felt that he had been, to a sensible extent, victimized, it may now without any impropriety be stated that, as he could not suppress this purely natural feeling, he had been ever since looking out for the old groom with unparalleled sharpness and zeal. His expectation of meeting with that ancient individual had been particularly lively and strong : his object being to impart to the friends of that lady through him the fact that Stanley was the person by whom the gallant action

was performed ; for, being a pure and faithful servant, he held it to be a pity that they should remain in utter ignorance of him who was so justly and so eminently entitled to their thanks.

He had, however, been signally unsuccessful in his search. He had described with artistical fervour the chief characteristics of the animated piece of antiquity in question to every gentleman with whom he had the honour of being acquainted ; but, as they were unable to give him any specific clue to the discovery of the ancient, he felt quite at a loss ; for he did not conceive it to be strictly correct to advertise him in the *Hue and Cry*, or, indeed, in any of the public papers, although he would with much willingness have offered a reward of five shillings for his apprehension, to be paid on conviction of his being the same man.

Notwithstanding he had been grievously disappointed in spirit in divers instances in which he had made sure of having the honour to run him down, Bob nobly scorned to give the thing up : he felt perfectly certain that he should have the pleasure of meeting the old gentleman at some period somewhere ; and to show the rather extraordinary correctness of this conjecture, it will be necessary to explain that immediately after Stanley and Amelia had started to meet Sir William at the widow's, he miraculously beheld, as he was walking down Regent Street to have an hour's confidential conversation with a friend, the identical individual on horseback, behind a lady who really looked very much indeed like the one who had been so providentially preserved.

In an instant Bob knew him. He could not be mistaken. He could have sworn conscientiously to his being the same man. But then, what was he to do ? They were trotting rather briskly ; and the proximity of the groom to his mistress was so remarkable that he really could not speak to him then with any degree of convenience. He could therefore pursue but one course, and that course he did pursue. He started off with the inflexible determination not to lose sight of them, seeing that he felt at least *two* sovereigns all but in his pocket. He had not the smallest doubt that they resided in May Fair, or its immediate vicinity ; and, as they turned up Piccadilly, he darted after them with joy, although he found it excessively hot. They passed Bond Street and Sackville Street,—which, of course, was just what he expected ; but then they dashed up to the Park,—which did by no means meet his views ; and he could not avoid expressing privately to himself an innocent wish that it had been otherwise. There was, however, no help for it, although it was very sultry. He

still kept on, resolved not to be beaten ; but it cannot be denied that he found the perspiration becoming unpleasantly profuse. It is, however, the spirit which sustains a man under circumstances of an adverse character : it is that which enables him to overcome difficulties, under which he would else of necessity sink. Bob highly appreciated this profoundly philosophical fact ; and hence would not permit his manly spirit to flag. Still he thought it very hard, for he felt very warm and uncomfortable as the conviction flashed vividly across his brain, that, instead of the lady being on her way home, as he had fondly conceived, she had in reality but just come out ; and, when he took into calm consideration the character of ladies in the aggregate, he thought it extremely probable that Heaven only knew when she meant to return. He, notwithstanding all this, disdained to lose sight of her ; he still kept on running ; and, as he ran, a variety of ideas kept darting into his head and darting out again. There was, however, one which made a short stay, and this was, that if he went back to the gate he should be just as secure as if he ran round the ring. But then, he asked himself how he could, in the nature of things, tell that she would not go out at one of the other gates ? This was a question to which he could give no satisfactory answer ; and, as at the moment the ghosts of two sovereigns, as if to warn him, flitted grimly before his imagination, he felt strongly that it would not do at all to leave anything to chance, although he had a horrid notion that he should not be able to keep the game alive much longer, seeing that he actually did feel as nearly as possible exhausted.

Having passed Cumberland Gate, the lady, with great consideration, walked her horse, which Bob held to be a blessing, and was very thankful for it. It enabled him to recover his breath a little ; when, perceiving that all was quite safe, he took a short cut back, still keeping his eyes fixed with surpassing firmness upon his object, and being prepared to dart after her if she offered to turn ; but, happily for him, no such offer was made. Gracefully and deliberately she came along the drive, and at length passed into Piccadilly.

At this point Bob tried to attract the attention of the ancient groom, who happened to be a greater distance behind his mistress than usual ; but that gentleman, being absorbed in his own private reflections, failed to notice him ; a circumstance which Bob did not care much about ; for, in the first place, he was not in a fit state to speak to any one having the slightest pretensions to respectability ; in the second, he could not have held any lengthened conversation with him then ; and in the third, he imagined that there could not be two strictly rational

opinions about his being able now to discover their residence with ease. Under these peculiar circumstances, therefore, he continued to follow them ; and, albeit from Park Lane to Burlington Arcade the lady caused him to run with great velocity, he was firmly determined that it never should be said after all that he gave in. From Burlington Arcade to the Circus they proceeded very coolly ; but they dashed off again up Regent Street, where several individuals of Bob's acquaintance turned to marvel what on earth it could be which caused him to run at such an ungentlemanly rate. He stopped not, however, to explain ; but kept on with great spirit until the lady cantered calmly over Oxford Street, at which point his heart sank within him.

"Is it possible," thought he, "that she is going to have a turn in the Regent's Park?"

As she passed Langham Church he held this to be very possible ; but, just as he was putting it to himself—first, whether he was able to hold out ; and, second, whether, if even he had the ability, it was worth his while to do so, she stopped before a door, which was immediately opened by a porter, when with the necessary assistance she dismounted, and Bob felt revived. It was all safe, then ; but he really felt dreadfully out of breath, and, therefore, instead of accosting his old friend at once, he followed him coolly to the stables.

"Whose servant is that, my little buffer?" he inquired of a boy who was cleaning a patent bit, and hissing at it like a young serpent.

"Vot Venerable Joe, in the next stable? Gene'l Johnsonses."

"I'll give you a ha'p'ney," said Bob, "if you'll tell him that a gentleman wants to see him at the tap when he's done."

The lad promised to do so, and took the reward, when Bob went to the tap, and proceeded to restore to some extent the respectability of his appearance.

Venerable Joe, when he heard that a gentleman wished to see him at the tap, did not suffer much time to elapse before he made his appearance. Had his presence been required at the General's residence, it is rational to suppose that he would not have been in quite so much haste ; but the tap was a place which he specially favoured, having no tender wife in the hay-loft ; no lovely little cherubs hanging over the bar to cry, "Mother ! oh, look ! father's going it again ;" He was a man without incumbrance, a perfectly free man, and, therefore, the moment Bob's ambassador had explained the precise object of his mission, he slipped on his easy dress, and started off to obey the summons.



"Ah! my old Scoglivax! Well, and how are you?" cried Bob, as the ancient groom entered.

"Vy, middlin'," said Venerable Joe; "but you've got the advantage on me, railly."

"What, don't you remember my master the other day dragged off your missus, you know, off that horse?"

"Vell, I thought, some 'ow or other, I'd seen yer afore. Vell, 'ow are yer?"

"Oh! hearty. Come drink. But I say though, how did you manage to catch that there bolter?"

"The warmint! He voodn't let me ketch 'im at all. He vorn't brought back till the follerin' mornin', and then p'traps he vorn't in no state!"

"You went after him, of course?"

"In course I vent arter 'im; but, at my time o' life, yer see, I allus takes things heasy; and so, ven I found I couldn't ketch 'im, yer see I guv 'im up."

"Well, sit down, and make yourself miserable."

"Vait a bit. Von't be a minute. I'll jist git vun o' them 'ere boys there to rub down my 'ossea, and twist back ag'in in a instant."

"Well," said Bob to himself in strict confidence when Venerable Joe had departed, "of all the rum things in human nature, the principle of keeping on old files like that in a family is just about the rummest. Why don't they superannuate the bucks? What are they good for? If a horse bolts away they can't catch him. They're just good-for-nothing; and yet they are sent to protect young ladies whose blessed little necks may be in danger a thousand times, without their even attempting to do any good, because they will take things easy. Why don't they pension them off! That's my sentiments."

Venerable Joe soon returned; and when he did return he duly inquired of Bob how he felt himself by that time, which was very affectionate; and Bob made an appropriate reply, and then went to work in earnest.

"Well," said he, "that was a queer start, though; wasn't it, eh?"

"I believe yer," said Venerable Joe, "it just vos. Your gov'ner must a bin rather a rummy un to 've coteht that air warmint, 'cos he ain't no dirt."

"No, he's a decentish sort. But was your misses hurt at all?"

"Not a bit; but werry frightened. Ven she come round she vundered oo it vos. Says she, 'Joseph,' says she, 'd'yer know,' says she, 'that air genelunan?'—'No, miss,' says I, 'I

carn't say,' says I, 'I know oo he is; but I think,' says I, 'I've seed 'im afore.' The old General, too, vos werry anxious about 'im; but I couldn't tell oo he vos, 'cos I didn't know."

"My governor, you see, is such a bashful cove. I wanted him to stop; but he cut away as if he was afeard of being thanked, which was not the thing exactly: but do you tell them that it was him. It's a pity they shouldn't know, for it really was very well done.

Venerable Joe quite agreed with Bob, who gave him his master's address, and thus laid the foundation. He then had the pot again replenished, and they became very friendly and very communicative, and entered into each other's views, and conversed on various topics with great eloquence and point; and, in the course of conversation, the ancient explained how many miles he once walked within the hour, how many runs he once scored in one innings, how many sparrows out of eleven he once killed from five traps, how many pins he got down nine times running at skittles, how many quoits he once rang out of a dozen; with a full explanation of an infinite variety of equestrian manœuvres, which never could have been performed by any other man.

"Well," said Bob at length, "and how do you stand for the Darby?"

"Vy, I carn't say as I'm in for much this 'ear, although I know the 'oss as is to do the trick as vell as his rider as is to 'ave a thousand pun' note ven he vins."

"Well, I don't care much," said Bob, "I'm all safe; but I shouldn't mind standing a drop of anything you like to know that."

"Vy, yer see, I don't know that I can tell yer jist yet, yer see, without betraying confidence; and if I do that they'll never tell me nothin' ag'in; but I shall see yer ag'in, no doubt, werry soon, and you shall be the fust to 'ave the office. 'Ave you got a heavyish book thish ear?"

"Why, not a very heavy 'un," replied Bob, as he produced it. "I always bet wet. Dry bets are so troublesome to get in. Men don't like to fork out dry money; and if you bore 'em, you know, it's a delicate thing, besides, it looks so, when they don't mind paying for what they have part of. I've got—let me see, I've got down forty glasses of brandy-and-water, six-and-twenty of rum-and-water, seventy-two fourpenn'orths of gin-and-water, thirty pots of ale, and eight-and-twenty ditto of half-and-half; and, according to my reckoning, if one horse wins—and I'm quite nuts upon him—I shall win twenty glasses of brandy-and-water, sixteen fourpenn'orths, and twelve pots of ale; and if he loses, let it go how it may, I can't win

less than six of brandy-and-water, ten of rum-and-water, four-penn'orths, and eight pots of half-and-half."

"But, vether he vins or loses, the whole bilin' 's to comé in."

"As a matter of course, every drain. Now I'm open to take seven to two against the favourite in anything."

"That don't suit my book," observed Venerable Joe. "I can bet five to two."

"Brandy-and-water?"

"No; aither fourpenn'orths or arf-and-arf."

"Wait a bit," said Bob, who again consulted his book, while the ancient knitted his brows, and looked very mysterious. "Make it brandy-and-water, and I'll take you."

"Werry well, I don't care; but let me advise yer as a friend not to be too spicy upon the favourite. I ou'y mean it, in course, as an 'int."

"Oh! I'm safe enough. Let's see—General Johnsonses Joseph, five to two, brandy-and-water. That 's all regular. Now let us see how I stand."

Bob then proceeded to make up his book, and found himself still in a very fair position; and when they had had another pot of half-and-half he took leave of his antique friend, again impressing upon his mind the implicit character of the faith he had in his promise that he would at once inform the General where Stanley was to be found, and the warm re-assurances of Venerable Joe made him happy.

"The General," thought he, "is now certain to call; and when he does call, of course he'll inquire about me; and, when I see him, I don't see how he can make me a present of less than a sov., and the lady herself can't stand less than another. So that it's not on the whole a bad move by any means!"

Nor was it. As far as the calling of the General was concerned, Bob's conjecture was very correct, for the General did call the following morning, and Amelia was delighted to see him. He was a friend of her father—a bosom friend; and, therefore, although Stanley was from home at the time, he sent his card up to her, in the full conviction that he was right, for the name of Thorn had been impressed upon his mind by the circumstance of its having been at Richmond made the subject of many bitter puns.

"My poor girl!" he cried, as Amelia approached him. "I hope you are well."

"I thank you," said Amelia, "quite well. Oh! I am so glad to see you. This is indeed kind."

The General explained why he had called, and then shook his head mournfully.

"You would reprove me?" said Amelia.

"No, no, my poor girl! not you—not you; I blame him; but I shouldn't have cared even for that if he had been a good fellow."

"Good, General! What may you mean?"

"Sad dog!—sad dog! Sorry for you—very sorry."

"As far as my Stanley is concerned, upon my word you need not be, for he is one of the kindest creatures that ever breathed."

"Silly girls!—silly girls! it is just like you all. Why, I hear—but, no matter. I can but regret it."

"If you have heard," said Amelia, "anything at all unfavourable of him, you have heard that which is highly incorrect. They who state that he is not a dear, kind, good, affectionate soul, basely wrong him."

"Well—well," said the General, again taking her hand: "but tell me, now, candidly,—I know you are all very anxious to conceal the faults of those whom you love,—but come, tell me—it may be better for you, my poor girl, in every way,—is he really, now, what you represent him to be?"

"He is indeed," replied Amelia fervently. "Believe me he is kind—most kind."

"Then, by Heaven! the Captain shall hold out no longer. I'll make him come round. He shall do it."

"Oh, if you could induce dear papa to forgive us."

"He shall!" exclaimed the General. "A man has no right to be severe without reason!"

"I feel that I have given him great cause to be severe; but do use your kind influence. Do, there's a dear soul! Pray—pray do assure him that his anger is now the only thing which renders our happiness imperfect. Do this, and I will bless you!"

"Depend upon me, my dear girl. I'll run down to-morrow. I'll make him come round. I thought you had a mad, harum-scarum, rakish rascal for a husband, who delighted in making you wretched; instead of a fine, brave, high-spirited fellow, who, while he knows what is due to himself, can respect the best feelings of others. I know he's a fine fellow. I'm sure of it. If he had not been, he couldn't have saved my poor girl. I respect him. I admire him. Rely upon it, I'll put matters right, down at Richmond."

Amelia thanked him, and blessed him, and begged of him to give her dear love to her papa; and to implore in her name his forgiveness. All which the General promised most faithfully to do; and then left her in tears, which were not those of sorrow.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

IN WHICH A POINT OF SOME INTEREST IS ARGUED AT RICHMOND.

WHEN Bob heard that General Johnson had called, his indignation was excessive. He was in the house at the very time, nay all the time the General was there; and therefore could not but express in the warmest terms his sense of the extremely ungentlemanlike conduct of his fellow-servant William, who knew that the most direct intimations had been given, that when the General called he desired to have the honour of letting him out. He was conscious of this, quite conscious; and yet, having taken up the General's card, and become thereby certain of its being the General, this slave of passion returned to the kitchen, in which Bob and the cook were refreshing themselves with cold chicken and short cakes, and never mentioned a single syllable having reference to the General until he had actually departed! This Bob held to be a dereliction of principle, of a description so monstrous that it was with extreme difficulty that he withheld that degree of prompt chastisement to which he conceived the delinquent entitled. His philosophy, however, imparted strength to his forbearance, and eventually caused him to be content with administering a grave expostulation, to the justice of which the cook promptly subscribed; for that amiable person had an ardent affection for Bob,—an affection which manifested itself chiefly in this, that she reserved for him exclusively all those delicacies of which she knew him to be strikingly fond, which was a monopoly, a species of favouritism, of which William did by no means approve; for, as he had an ardent affection for the cook, it rendered him very uncomfortable. It is to this, and to this alone, that his highly reprehensible conduct on the occasion in question must be attributed. He was jealous—in the tenderest sense jealous; and, albeit the object of his love was extremely tyrannical, and treated him with every unladylike indignity, when he saw her and Bob thus enjoying themselves with the short cakes and chickens, the spirit of revenge took possession of his soul so securely, that it was with a feeling of intense satisfaction he announced, when the General had left, that the General had been. This feeling was, however, short-lived; for while the cook laboured zealously to prove to him how utterly unfit he was in consequence to be in any respectable kitchen, Bob was engaged in philosophically showing that his behaviour was beneath the true dignity of a man, which had a powerful effect.

Stanley no sooner returned than Amelia explained to him with feelings of delight that Miss Johnson was the lady whom he had rescued; that the General had called with a warm heart to thank him; and that he had promised to use his influence with the Captain in their favour; all which imparted great satisfaction to Stanley, who, however, felt more than he expressed.

"I wonder," said he, "how the General found me out."

"His servant, it appears, knew you."

"Well, I am glad that he has called, because, knowing the family it will be pleasant for you; and I appreciate his kindness in offering to reason with your father; but rely upon it, Amelia, he will soon come round without the mediation of friends; and perhaps it would have been quite as well to let him in his own way get over his obstinacy."

"Nay, my love, do not use a term so harsh."

"Why, what other term can be so applicable? What but obstinacy is it?—sheer obstinacy?"

"Fie, Stanley! Remember he is my father!"

"Well, well, my good girl, I'll say no more—Oh! by the by, Wornwell wants me to dine with him to-day. Will you give me leave to go?"

"Give you leave!" said Amelia, with a smile.

"Why, of course. I cannot presume to go without. I told him that you ruled me with a rod of iron, and that therefore your permission must first be obtained."

Amelia was rather pleased with this idea,—she thought it quite original,—and playfully said, that as such was the case, if he promised to be good, he might go, for which, of course, he felt grateful; and well knowing how little it required to delight that gentle creature, expressed his gratitude with appropriate humility, and then summoned Bob, for the purpose of giving him instructions to take the horses down to Epsom in the morning.

With these instructions Bob, of course, was highly pleased; and in the morning he accordingly started; and at about the same time General Johnson set off with the view of performing his promise to Amelia. The General had in the interim formed his plan. When he proposed to himself the attainment of any object he would carry the point, if possible, by storm; but being an excellent tactician, and knowing Captain Joliffe sufficiently well to know that with him his favourite mode of attack would not succeed, he had made up his mind to accomplish the thing by stratagem, although he preferred the storming principle much. He appeared to feel that his reputation was at stake in this matter; and it was indeed one of his chief

characteristics that whenever he undertook to perform a task for another, he felt more deeply mortified in the event of a failure than the person whom he generously intended to serve. It was hence that he had studied his course of proceeding in this case so deliberately ; and as the result of that study was to convince him that he must act with great caution upon the Captain's pride, he resolved to make it appear that he entertained the most friendly feelings towards Stanley, and to show that his noble spirit rendered him worthy not only of the affection of Amelia, but of general esteem and admiration, well knowing how powerfully men are influenced by the opinions of those who form the social circles in which they move, and how easily favourable prepossessions are thus created, and adverse prejudices destroyed.

On arriving at Richmond, the General was, as usual, received most cordially. The Captain insisted upon his dining with them, of course, and equally of course the General consented, but conversed upon none but ephemeral topics until they had dined, when he thought it correct to touch with care upon that point which he felt himself then more than ever bound to carry, and, therefore, much to the delight of Mrs. Joliffe, who indulged in occasional exclamations of joy, proceeded to relate all the circumstances connected with the perilous position of his daughter, taking care to paint the rescue in colours the most attractive ; and, having set the Captain in the right train of thought, and drawn tears from the eyes of his affectionate lady, he, with admirable tact, waived the subject until he and the Captain were alone, when it was with great caution resumed, but with much more confidence on the part of the General who saw that he had already made a favourable impression.

"What a pity it is," said he, after a pause during which the Captain appeared to be lost in a reverie,—"what a pity it is you are not reconciled to that young man. I, of course, should be pleased if you were, as I am placed in rather an awkward position ; for I candidly confess to you that there are, indeed, very few whom I esteem more highly than him ; but, independently of that consideration, upon my honour I think that you have held out now quite long enough. I am aware that these fugitive marriages are very seldom productive of happiness ; but I must say that, as there is now every prospect of this being an exception to the general rule, you will not act with wisdom if you treat them too harshly."

"General, when I speak to you I speak not only to a man of sense and judgment, but to one who is a father, and who possesses a father's feelings. I therefore, with confidence, put

it to you how, under the self-same circumstances, would you have acted?"

"Doubtless, precisely as you have: nay, perhaps with a greater degree of harshness. I do not believe that I should have been quite so tranquil. But then, in our own cases, we appear to be incapable of forming a correct judgment. We ought not to act upon our own impulses alone; we ought to be guided by the calmer judgment of others; our own feelings are too warm, too acute, too one-sided to allow us to do justice. If any young dog were to run away with my girl, I should rave, and storm, and threaten to blow out his brains, no doubt; but then, I should look upon any other man who raved, and stormed, and threatened, under similar circumstances, as being unwise! We, therefore, ought not to depend upon our own judgment in such a case as this. It is perfectly sure to be perverted. We ought, rather, to be guided by those who have the power to feel all that we feel, but whose judgment is not warped by the immediate operation of those feelings. But what are the chief points of that young man's character to which you object?"

"His youth, and inexperience: his utter want of that knowledge of the world which is so essential to the pursuit of a prosperous and strictly honourable course through it."

"Exactly: the very points to which I should object. My girl should not, with my consent, marry any man who had not sufficient experience to resist the temptations, and to ward off the dazzling *diablerie* of the vicious. But what would you say to me if a young fellow without this experience were clandestinely to marry my girl, and I were to hold out, as you do, what would be your advice to me?"

"I should certainly advise you to hold out still, that he might feel that, as his wife had made a sacrifice of all for him, he was bound to cherish her with tenfold tenderness."

"Very good—very good. I should, then, think it excellent advice, and should follow it, no doubt; but, if I did, what besides should I be doing? Why, laying the foundation of the defeat of the very object I had in view: driving that young man to form promiscuous friendships; driving him in the way of every species of temptation; driving him pell-mell into the haunts of vice and villany; for, who can expect a young fellow like that to be always at home? He will go out, and ought to go out; but when he does, where is he to go? What connexions is he likely to form? Who are likely to be his associates, when, full of blood and spirit, he has the means of indulging in every extravagant pleasure? And then, his wife—what is she to do during his absence? Deserted by her



friends, because spurned by her relatives : no one to converse with, no one to visit, no one in whom she can with safety confide. It is true—very true, that she ought to have thought of this before ; but then, she didn't think of it : she rushed into this position, and there she is ! It is also true that she ought to consider herself but justly punished for her disobedience ; but, Captain, as men of the world, you and I well know it to be unsafe, to say the least of it, to punish a young and beautiful woman too severely in this way. Besides, we ought to take into consideration that all the punishment in such a case falls upon her, which is not the correct thing, by any means. You would not wish, I am certain, to be unduly severe with her ; you would not wish to stand as a barrier between her and happiness. I feel quite convinced that you never wished to do this, and yet is this the very thing you do. I should have done in every respect, no doubt, precisely as you have ; but I think, that after a time, I should have been induced to feel that I was thereby defeating the very object I wished to attain. Now, I never yet found you unreasonable. I am not a man to flatter ; you will acquit me, I am sure, of any desire to do that ; but I never knew you stubbornly to repudiate any rational view. It is hence that I now feel quite sure that, if you look at this matter again—calmly, you will be as well convinced, as I plainly confess that I am, that you will not be doing your duty as father if you sternly hold out after this."

"General, I need not assure you that my only object in holding out has been to secure, eventually, my poor girl's happiness. God bless her ! I love her as fondly as before. Nay, she seems to be even more dear to me than ever."

"I believe it. I know it. I feel it. Forgive her : forgive them both. She is a good girl, and he well deserves her. He treats her, as he ought, with the most affectionate tenderness."

"I am not sure of that."

"I am—perfectly sure. The intense, the artless fervour with which she assured me that such was the fact, renders it impossible for me to disbelieve it. Receive them, then. Come, you have no wish to torture her. Be reconciled. And—mark my words, Captain,—they will be happy, most happy, the happiest pair that ever lived."

"If I were sure of that——"

"Be sure of it ? make up your mind to it. Be sure of this, also, that it rests with you whether they are happy or miserable. Don't let them live as if they were outcasts of society. Don't drive that youth to seek an exciting change of scene among blacklegs and *roués*. Let him feel that you care for him, and he will care for you. Let him feel that he has some one with

whom he can advise. Let them both be restored to the position they ought to occupy. Let them both feel that in you they have a father, indeed. By Jupiter, sir, you'll do wrong if you continue to close your doors against them. Come, say you will receive them ; say you will meet them at my house : that, perhaps, will be better, for I know him to be a high-spirited dog, who is not much enamoured of humility, and I respect him the more ; for it affords, in my view, an additional proof that he takes his stand solely upon the honourable character of his intentions. Come, let me arrange it. Don't give me an answer now. Sleep upon it. Turn it well over in your mind : weigh every circumstance deliberately and calmly, and then let me know your decision."

This the Captain most willingly promised to do. He was even then prepared to decide, but the General would not receive his answer : he insisted upon the propriety of a little more reflection, although he by no means conceived it to be absolutely necessary, and soon after left, in the perfect conviction that the object proposed had been attained.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

### STANLEY AND BOB PURCHASE SOME EXPERIENCE AT EPSOM.

It were, perhaps, very vain, if not very presumptuous, to speculate deeply upon the subject without data ; but, if any purely patriotic member of the Commons were to move for a return of all the money lost and won on the Derby, such return would be a document of extraordinary interest, and one which, in the nature of things, would go far towards stunning the world. With the aid of a few accomplished calculating boys in full practice, the thing might be easily got at ; for they would only have two distinct classes to separate—the winners, and the losers,—to get on as fast as could well be expected ; while they would clearly derive very material assistance from a knowledge of the fact that twenty sporting characters may bet to the amount of twenty millions, without one of them winning or losing a pound.

But, apart from the high consideration having reference to the actual discovery of the amount, it seems abundantly clear that, although in a nominal sense they who are deep in the science of betting—for a science it has indisputably become—have it hollow ; the greatest amount of money is actually won from the brilliant superficial professors ; it being a striking truth, and one which no sort of sophistry can smother,

that in betting—although it is not so in music,—an imperfect sharp makes the most perfect flat.

When the mind is brought to bear with due weight upon the varied ramifications of this interesting science, it will be found to be one of so much excellence, *per se*, that, although it may be even now pretty well taught at our Universities, it will appear to be rather strange in the abstract that prizes should not have been established as well for that as for Greek and mathematics. This might, perhaps, in consequence of its immediate proximity to Newmarket, obtain in the first instance at Cambridge; for, albeit every Cambridge man now may be said to possess a fair knowledge of the elements of the science, that knowledge is clearly insufficient to induce a correct appreciation of its beauties, or to guide a sporting character out of that attractive labyrinth, into which ardent tyros are too prone to rush. How admirable is it to see a strictly scientific sporting character making up his book! As a grocer conducts a transaction of barter, as a high-toned attorney, standing boldly upon the legitimate integrity of his principles, makes out an ingenious bill of costs, to cover with comfort the sums received, so *he* weighs every item again and again with a perfectly uninterceptible view to its bearing upon the general balance. Nor is it necessary for him to be a judge of horse-flesh. By no means. He sports his money safely to the extent of tens of thousands, without seeing one of the horses that are entered: he bets upon credit, the credit of those who bet before him: the exercise of his own individual judgment is altogether supererogatory: he gives and takes the odds in the dark; but, oh! what a highly enlightened darkness is his! And in this, perhaps, consists the chief beauty of the science. If a horse be the favourite at Tattersall's, he is, in consequence, the favourite all over the world, if even he should have but three legs. His pedigree is nothing: his name is up. He is the *favourite*! That is held to be sufficient by regular sporting characters, from the highest to the lowest; from those who take six to four in thousands, to those who take three to two in fourpenny pieces.

Now Stanley's knowledge of this science was extremely superficial. He had, indeed, been enlightened by Sir William to a certain extent: he had had his eyes sufficiently opened to see his way with perfect distinctness into a hole, but by no means sufficiently opened to see his way out again; which, when an individual is to be fleeced, is a far more ingenious mode of procedure than that of making him believe that he is quite in the dark; because, in that case, he feels his way so carefully that the odds are decidedly against your being able to get him in at all: whereas, one who has been half enlight-

ened on the subject, believes that he knows all about it, and enters into the thing with all the confidence in nature. This was precisely the case with Stanley. He had before no conception that so much money was to be won with so much ease, and, therefore, bet to the extent of some thousands, and would have bet more, but Sir William, who was far too ingenious to frighten him, *in limine*, not only closed his book, but resolved, for the look of the thing, to induce him to hedge down at Epsom with one of those *purely* sporting men who are always to be found in the ring, in order that what he might actually lose he might nominally cover.

Well, all the preliminaries having been arranged after the most approved fashion, Stanley, Amelia, and Sir William, on the morning of the great Derby day, proceeded to the residence of the widow, who had prepared a sumptuous breakfast, and sundry hampers containing champagne, sherry, chickens, tongues, pigeon-pies, cakes, and a variety of other little articles, designed for demolition on the course. They were all in high spirits. Their pleasure, perhaps, sprang from various sources: but they were all, nevertheless, on most exalted terms, as well with each other as with themselves; and, as Sir William had suggested the expediency of starting early, at nine o'clock precisely the carriage was announced, and looked—when the party had taken their seats, and the servants, in flaming liveries, were on the box, and the postboys were mounted, duly embellished with satin jackets of the brightest celestial blue,—rather *distingué* than not.

It was a hazy morning, and the atmosphere was like a hot bath; but even in those which are usually the most quiet streets, the carriages were rattling up to the doors, and the servants were bringing out the hampers, and all seemed to be in one universal bustle. It is not, however, until they reach the point at which the carriages from all parts of the metropolis meet, that the unsophisticated are able to form a correct conception of the varied characteristics of the equipages that are to accompany them down the road. Here Stanley and the widow, neither of whom had been down before, were amazed. There was nothing in the shape of a vehicle which had not had its wheels greased expressly for the occasion; nothing in the similitude of a horse, at all likely to do the six-and-thirty miles in twenty hours without giving up the ghost, which had not received an extra severe curry-combing, together with an additional feed of corn, with the view of imparting respectability and spirit to his appearance on that auspicious day. Such, then, being the generally joyful state of things, of course plenty of amusement was to be found; and, as Stanley and Sir William

made highly characteristic observations upon every vehicle, and every creature in every vehicle, of a remarkable character, they were all very merry, and laughed very heartily, and seemed to be the happiest of the happy.

"Now," said Sir William, as they entered the lane which leads from the town of Epsom to the Downs, "you may all go to sleep for half-an-hour, for this is the most tedious part of the journey."

They were not, however, disposed to go to sleep, although the line moved but slowly along; for as it did move at a pace, the consolation was conspicuous, and, on arriving at the top, the brilliant appearance of the Downs well repaid them for whatever tedium they might have experienced.

"Oh, what a lovely scene!" exclaimed the widow, directing Amelia's attention towards the hill. "Well, really now this is enchanting! Sir William, have we to go to that beautiful spot?"

"As you please," replied the Baronet; "but I think that we had better get near the grand stand, where the horses will pass quite close to us."

"That *will* be delightful! Oh! will it not, my love?"

Amelia assented, and directions were given to get as near the grand stand as possible, on a line with the course. On entering the enclosure, they were all highly pleased with the scene which burst upon them; but the widow—oh! she was in ecstasies! She had never, she was sure she had never in the whole course of her life beheld anything so heavenly!—everything did look so gay, so delightful, so glorious! And then the grand stand! Well, really—she never did!—oh! nothing could surpass it!

No sooner had they taken their stations than Bob duly appeared with the horses, which, when Stanley and Sir William, at the earnest solicitation of the widow, had taken some refreshment, they mounted, and rode to the wood.

Stanley was a very fair judge of a horse, and when all that were to start were brought out, one of the outsiders appeared to him to have been betted against rather too heavily. He therefore re-examined his book, and the result of that re-examination was, that he did not much like his position. Nor did Bob much like his; for, by virtue of making cross-bets, with the view of hedging, he had got into an extraordinary arithmetical maze, having made divers gross and disgraceful mistakes, by recording in his favour a variety of bets, which were in reality against him. He was, therefore, highly pleased when Stanley returned, which he did as soon as possible, in order to back his own judgment; and having entered the ring, he almost immediately got into conversation with Major Foxe,

who pompously pronounced himself open to take the three first horses against the field for an even thousand. This was precisely what Stanley wanted, and he took the bet at once, and they formally exchanged cards, and then made several other bets, which brought Stanley home pretty safely, very much to the delight of Sir William, whom he consulted, and with whom, on the strength of the Major's bets, he increased his liabilities, and having closed his book, invited the Major to join them.

While Stanley was in the ring, thus bringing himself nominally round, Bob, with unparalleled zeal and intensity of feeling, was studying the nature of his position, as strikingly manifested by his book, and found eventually the evidence it imparted to be of a nature so particularly conflicting, that he all at once became so enlightened, that he perceived with amazing distinctness, that he couldn't understand it at all. He tried hard, nay, he tried with desperation, to comprehend the bearings of his hieroglyphical conceptions; but the more desperately he tried, the more profoundly he studied, the more acutely and cunningly he reckoned, the more chaotic his intellectual faculties became, which was, to his extremely sensitive feelings, indeed, truly terrible. At length he confidentially intimated to the widow's coachman, who was, at that exciting period, upon the box, that he was ardently anxious to have the benefit of his advice upon a subject of no inconsiderable importance; and the coachman, who had acquired the reputation of being rather a far-seeing individual, accordingly descended to consult him.

"Coachman," said he, with due solemnity of aspect, "did you see that brindle in the course there, just now, which cocked his blessed tail mysterious atween his legs, and cut away back'ards and forrards, acause he couldn't tell at all how to get out?"

"In course," replied the coachman, "I did."

"Well, then, I'm just in that identical speeches of mess. There's lots of ways to get out; but I know no more how, than that brindle, which makes it just as bad as if there wasn't."

"Werry good; but if you'll just convert that into regular English, I shall be able to understand it, perhaps."

"Why, don't you see!" exclaimed Bob, disgusted with the extreme dulness of the fellow's perception. "Don't I tell you I'm in a blessed mess here, and want you to show me how to see my way out on it!—Do you know anything at all about betting?"

"Why, it strikes me I do, as well as here and there one."

"Then cast your invincibles over this book." Here Bob

pointed out his hieroglyphics. "Them means brandy-and-water—them rum-and-water—them fourpenn'orths—them ale—and them there, where two ha'pences is, means, of course, half-and-half. Now, just look deliberate over that, and then tell me exact how I stand. There's a trump!"

The coachman took the book, and studied the state of things intently, while Bob, with much earnestness, watched his emotions. At length, with great gravity, he spoke to this effect:—

"I say, though, my buffer, wort *have* you been at! You're the boy to make money by bettin'!"

"What's the matter?" cried Bob, who felt really alarmed.

"Wort's the matter! Look here! You've just managed it dexterous so, that, if that 'ere oss don't win, you lose pretty nigh all the lot; and even he does win, you don't win a screw."

"Why, how do you make that out?" demanded Bob, indignantly.

"How do I make it hout! Why, look here—look at them there brandies-an'-water—why, they're hevery individual one on 'em agin you!"

"How do you mean? Haven't I taken seven to two, four or five times over?"

"I know you have; but haven't you hedged off there by giving four to one on the same oss, four or five times over? Don't you see!" As far as the fourpenn'orths goes, it don't matter which wins: it's like giving two fardens for a ha'penny; but you're in for the brandy-and-water, and you're in for the ale, and you're in for the whole mob of arf-and-arf."

Bob stood for a moment as if petrified. The spirit of incredulity took possession of him at first, and caused him to have a most profound contempt for his friend's calculating faculty, albeit he did strongly feel that there was a horrible hitch somewhere; but when it had been pointed out to him distinctly how the various gross mistakes had been made, he perspired with great freedom, and looked dreadfully cut up.

"Well," said he, scratching his head with unexampled perseverance, "I'm a donkey—I know it—I know I'm a donkey, and so I don't want to be told. As the French says, this is a out-and-out case of *horse de combat*. You are right—oh! I see regular plain that you are right. If the favourite don't do the trick, *perhaps* I shan't be in a pickle! and the favourite's no favourite of mine."

"You've seed the osses all on 'em, haven't yer? Is there any one you particular fancy?"

"Why, yes, there's a little un there; but there's fifty to one against him, so he can't be no sort, though he looks as if he might be."

"Now, take my advice: you go and get all the hods you can agin the field. Never mind any oss, take the field. That's the only way to perwent your losing all the whole squaddy."

"I see! I see! Here catch hold a minute. I won't be gone long. I know where to find a few trumps as gives odds. But *may* I be smothered!"

Swelling with indignation at his dense stupidity, and cherishing a bright and most beautiful hope, Bob started with the view of honourably taking in some gentleman whom he had the felicity to number among his friends. The news, however, had spread that the field was sure to win; all wished to take the very odds that he wished to take. In vain he endeavoured to inspire them with the belief that they thereby stood in their own light: they wouldn't have it:—they pronounced it simultaneously "no go." Thus foiled, thus deceived, and that, too, in a quarter in which he had reposed the utmost confidence, and in which he had centred every hope, his heart sank within him as he returned to communicate the melancholy fact to his friend. It was then that he felt that he was in the hands of fate,—it was then that he promised, that if in this, his extremity, fate would but be propitious, no power on earth should ever induce him to be so consummate a donkey again. And yet—why—who could tell? The favourite!—the favourite was a good horse, a capital horse! He didn't like the look of him much, but he might win, he ought to win,—nay, on reflection, he *would* win. He resolved to entertain no doubt about the matter, for every doubt was painful. Hurrah for the favourite! The favourite against the field! The favourite for a thousand! The favourite for ever! He was not going then to lie down in a ditch and die!

The bell rang, and all were on the *qui vive*. The most earnest anxiety prevailed. The next two minutes were to decide that in which all seemed interested deeply. Had every man present had all he possessed in the world then at stake, his suspense at that moment could not have appeared more painful. The horses started. "They are off! they are off!" shouted thousands simultaneously, and every eye was strained in the direction of the hill. They appeared! They swept the brow with the speed of lightning! They passed the corner! they came straight up the course! Pink was a-head. "Pink! pink! Bravo, pink! Yellow! yellow! Go along, pink!—Blue!—Green!—Red!" nay, every colour in the rainbow was shouted, in order to urge each along. The post was gained. Two seemed neck and neck. Few at the moment could tell which had won; but as one of the two was the favourite, Bob shouted, "The favourite! the favourite! Oh! hollow!" And



he leaped like a deer from the back of the carriage, and opened his shoulders, and rubbed his hands, and patted his horses, and slapped his thigh, and threw himself at once into a state of ecstasy the most delicious. The next moment a sound reached his ear, a sound which made him tremble! He turned towards the winning-post, and there he beheld the number of an outsider? The favourite had lost! Instantly his countenance fell. He slapped his thigh no more. He struck Marmion on the nose for presuming to snort at such a moment, conceiving it to be in the abstract highly reprehensible, and sank into an awful state of melancholic gloom.

Sir William, of course, was delighted, but he studied to conceal his delight at the time; while Stanley, who had brought himself pretty nearly home, having won all his bets with the Major, congratulated himself on having backed his own judgment. The Major did not appear to be much depressed. He was a loser, he said, it was true, but not to any great amount, having taken a variety of other bets, which had been decided in his favour. He held it, therefore, to be a matter of no material importance; and, having politely declined the pressing invitation of Stanley to partake of their refreshments, he begged that he might have the honour of a call at the United Service Club in the morning, as on settling day the probability was that he should have to leave town.

The Widow, who playfully affected to be very indignant indeed with that tiresome thing of a horse, which had been the cause of her losing a dozen pair of gloves to Amelia, now ordered the hampers to be opened, and when the leaf of a table had been adjusted upon the doors of the carriage, it was speedily covered with the viands she had prepared, and they all ate heartily, with the collateral enjoyment of the scene around them, which was certainly one of great excitement and splendour.

They had, however, no sooner commenced their repast than the widow's benevolence was powerfully excited; for a party of four ladies and two gentlemen, who occupied the carriage next to hers, had to their horror found, on their hamper being opened, that the new rope by which it had been suspended from the axle, had stretched to an extent that enabled the hamper in little hilly parts of the road to come in contact with the ground with sufficient violence to break to atoms the dishes, bottles, and glasses, and thereby to mix them and the provisions together; and truly to the eye it was a most unpleasant mixture, inasmuch as the pie-crust was saturated with wine, the broken glass had worked its way into the chickens, the pigeons with the gravy were mixed up with stout and straw,

while the ham had been made, by the fragments of the bottles, to appear as if it had been nibbled by a legion of rats.

The widow, when she saw their distress, felt for them acutely, and sent to beg their acceptance of one of her pies, and part of her ham, with a pair of her chickens, and so on, which they did not by any means like to receive ; but, on being warmly pressed, they at length consented to accept them, provided they were also presented with a card, which proviso was agreed to, and all were made happy.

Immediately after their repast, Stanley and Sir William remounted their horses, being anxious to make a few bets upon the next race ; and, while they were gone, Bob, the widow's servants, and the postboys, commenced operations upon the refreshments which had been left, and which, as the widow was exceedingly liberal with her wine, they all amazingly enjoyed, with the exception of Bob, whose spirit was painfully perturbed. He was haunted by his erroneous calculations, and spectres of innumerable glasses of brandy-and-water, and rows of pots of ale and half-and-half, which really seemed to have no end, flitted before him as merrily as if they were overjoyed at the fact of his having to pay for them all. The only question with him was, how could he get out of his embarrassed position ?—and his utter inability to conceive a satisfactory answer to this question dealt destruction to his appetite, and rendered him wretched. At length he managed to hit upon an expedient by which he might gain at least a trifle towards covering his extremely heavy spirituous liabilities. In the next race eight horses were to run, and he proposed a quiet sweepstakes, in which he got the coachman, the footman, and one of the postillions to join. He then tore a piece of paper into eight, and having established the numbers respectively thereon, and folded and put them into his hat, each subscribed half-a-crown, and then drew two numbers, and Bob's were the first and second horses on the list.

"Well," thought he, "this is something." And so it was ; and he began to eat a little, and to feel somewhat better. Half a sovereign would indisputably pay for ten good shilling glasses. There could be no miscalculation about that, although he quite forgot his own small subscription,—which perhaps was as well, for his mind was the more at ease, and the consequence was, that he eventually made a very highly respectable meal.

The bell rang again for the course to be cleared, and Stanley and Sir William returned.

"Well, which is the best horse ?" inquired the widow.

"The favourite," replied Stanley, "I should say in this race."

"The favourite:—well, Amelia and I are going to have another bet."

"Indeed," said Amelia, "I do not understand it."

"Nor do I, my love, much; but we must have a bet. Now, I'll bet you—let me see—a satin dress!—and you shall have which horse you please."

"That will be about two to one," observed Stanley.

"No, no—one to one; that is to say, even."

"But Amelia will bet two to one."

"Dear me, how ridiculous! One dress—one cannot be two!"

"I grant you that, of course; but I should say that it takes nearly double the quantity——"

"Indeed, sir, it takes no such thing," interrupted the blushing widow; for although she patted Stanley very playfully, and smiled, she did not approve of his making so incorrect an observation in the presence of Sir William. It was personal—very personal. Besides, she required but a few yards more than Amelia; not double the quantity, nor anything like double the quantity.

"I'll tell you, now, what will be a fair bet," said Stanley.

"You take the favourite against the field for a dress: that will bring the thing about even."

"Very well; let it be so. The favourite is mine. We must sport, my love, of course, like the rest."

Amelia consented to this arrangement, and the race almost immediately commenced. The excitement was not nearly so great; but there was still amply sufficient to keep all alive, and the colours were called as they passed as before. The favourite lost, and Stanley lost with the favourite. The widow also lost; and Bob lost the sweepstakes.

Of course the last-mentioned loss had the greatest effect upon the loser. He had firmly and resolutely made up his mind to win, and hence experienced a dreadful degree of depression. He felt that, in the nature of things, this was hard, and that fortune neither smiled upon the most meritorious, nor aided those who stood most in need of assistance. To him that half sovereign would have been of great service. The rest did not want it so much; for they had lost nothing on the Derby. He considered that, if fortune had not been sand-blind,—if she had had only half an eye open, she would have seen this,—and then, of course, the sweepstakes had been his; for he was sure that, to his knowledge, he had done nothing to offend her.

While involved in this deep consideration, standing like a statue, with his hands in his smalls,—which, indeed, was his customary attitude when he happened to have anything of a

strictly metaphysical character to compass,—a gentleman without his coat approached in wonderful haste, and, while performing a variety of original antics, commenced shouting, apparently in a frightful state of excitement.

"*Now*, who's for the last nine, the last nine, the last nine! *I've* on'y three minutes. A sovering for a shilling, or three for half-crown, to decide this here vunderful vagear *atween* them there two svell sportin' indiwidgeals, *the* Marqvis off Vortford and a honerble Hurl, *for* five thousand guineas aside here! *I'm* obligated for to dress like this here, *cos* the honerble Hurl don't believe as the people von't think these here coverings is good uns. *Who* 'll have the last nine, the last nine, the last nine here!"

"This is a do," observed Bob to a decent-looking person standing near him.

"Do you think so? I've a great mind to have three: it may be a bet," said the person addressed. "I'll have half-a-crown's worth;" and he had, and he appeared to be delighted with his bargain, and joyfully showed them to Bob, who was amazed.

"It is a wager," thought he. "They are good uns—real good uns. Why, three of these would set me all square!" It struck him at the moment that fortune, to propitiate him, had suggested that bet, and had sent him that man.

"*Now*, who's for the last six! *I've* on'y one minute *for* this vunderful vagear off ten thousand guineas. *Who* 'll have the last six for a crown here!"

Bob anxiously gave him five shillings, and received in return the six "sovereigns," which he instantly found to be villanous brass. But the fellow was off! he twisted into the crowd like an imp; and, as he who had prompted the purchase, by showing the three real sovereigns, shot also away, it at once became evident to Bob that they were confederates.

"Only just hold my horses," said he to a man standing by; and he started off after them fiercely. But how vain was the pursuit! The next moment they were lost to him for ever.

This was indeed a heavy blow. It was terrible to his already wounded feelings. It was cruel. He could have cried; but he repressed the rising extract of sorrow with indignation.

"To be such a out-and-out fool!" he exclaimed, clenching his fists very desperately, and looking very vicious, "when I ought to have known that it was nothing but a do; when my own common sense ought to have told me it was nothing but a regular dead take-in! Here's things!" he continued, holding the sovereigns again before his wondering eyes. "Here's muck! Here's a blessed five shillings' worth! *Don't* I wish I could

see that there varmint anywheres about here? *Wouldn't* I give him a leetle pepper?"

Again Bob looked anxiously around; but, as he could not catch even a glimpse of the ingenious gentleman in question, he returned to his horses, frightfully depressed.

"Hallo, my Bobby!" exclaimed the coachman, "anything petickler o'clock?"

"No, nothing of much odds," replied Bob; who conceived it to be expedient to keep the sovereign job a secret, at least from that particular quarter.

"We're goin' for to 'ave another sweepstakes. There's on'y four 'osses. Will yer join us?"

"Oh, if you like. I'm safe to lose. Nobody never had such a sweet luck as me. But I'll be in it."

He accordingly put down his half-crown, and drew; but he scooped to look at the number. He would *not* know which horse he had drawn until after the race, and therefore placed the paper carefully in his pocket, while he looked another way, lest his eyes should fall upon it by accident. He then had a glass of wine with the rest beneath the foot-board; but continued to be mournfully silent, although he occasionally gave his horses for the slightest misbehaviour the most severe look they ever witnessed.

The interval between the races was in this case unusually short. The course was no sooner clear than the bell rang again, and the horses started. They did the half mile in about half a minute, and actually the very horse which won cleverly by a length, was the horse which Bob had drawn. In his view this altered the general aspect of things most materially; for, albeit, it but restored him to the position which he occupied at the conclusion of the Derby, it was abundantly manifest to him that his "luck" had really changed; and he brightened up signally, and chatted a little, and breathed upon the four half-crowns, and deposited them promptly in the off-pocket of his smalls, with an air which denoted intense satisfaction. He then proposed that the next sweepstakes should be doubled. This, however, was declined. The same sum was put down, and they drew; but Bob would not have looked at what he had drawn if any man had offered him seven and sixpence. He had not looked at the last, and he had won. He naturally felt that there was a great deal in that.

Amelia and the widow now alighted, with the view of promenading the course; and, as this had been at the sole suggestion of Sir William, it was specially appreciated by the widow, who scarcely could tell how she did feel while walking for the first time in public with an honourable baronet. It were poor

indeed to describe that feeling as being that of pride. It was a higher, a purer, a more intensely delicious feeling than that; and she stepped so lightly, and her plume waved so gracefully, while she felt so much ecstasy sparkling in her eyes, that, as she tripped past Amelia, she really did think that any absolute stranger would be puzzled to tell which of the two looked the younger.

While they were admiring the beauty of the Grand Stand, and other prominent features of the gay scene around them, Bob, elated with his success in the last sweepstakes, felt that, as Fortune now seemed disposed to favour him, he ought not to thwart her beneficent inclinations, and therefore set off for one of the booths, in which merveille appeared to him to be played upon a very fair, straight-forward principle. He stood for some time and looked on, and saw a great deal of money won and paid without a murmur, from a heap of half-crowns which stood by the side of an open cash-box, in which there was a sufficient number of notes to bind up into a good-sized volume, and a quantity of sovereigns, which seemed to be beyond calculation.

This display of wealth dazzled the eyes of Bob; and he resolved to have a trial. He put a shilling upon the black; it came black, and he took up two. He put a shilling upon the yellow: it came yellow, and he took up nine. Could he presume to doubt that Fortune had deigned to smile upon him then? He put two half-crowns upon the yellow, feeling that eight times that amount would be particularly acceptable; but it happened to come black. He tried again with five shillings: it was red. He tried five shillings more: it was blue. Well, it surely must come yellow next! He tried another five shillings: it came blue again. Blue was the favourite; but, then, five-shilling stakes were rather heavy! He put half-a-crown upon the blue: it was yellow. Tut! if he had but kept to the yellow! He tried yellow again: it was black. Then again, and it was black: and again, until he had no more silver. What, then, was to be done? Should he change his last sovereign? He would, and stake five shillings of it upon the yellow. He did so. It should be the last if he lost—the very last,—that he had made up his mind to. The ball was off: he watched it eagerly: it seemed to wish to go into the yellow: nay, it absolutely did go into the yellow; but on the instant changed its mind, and hopped into the blue. How extraordinary! Well! *should* he stake one more half-crown? No, he wouldn't; and yet, eight half-crowns were twenty shillings! One more—only one: down it went; and the ball, as if guided

by some malicious demon, popped again into the blue. Bob pressed his lips, and frowned, and looked round the booth wildly, and then attempted to leave ; but he felt within him something which urged him to turn, and he stood for some time in a state of irresolution.

"Now, gents, make your game : the ball's off, make your game !" cried the fellow who presided at the table. "If you won't play, gents, drink : sherry, champagne there, soda water, anything you like. Make your game !"

This had the effect of arousing Bob from his reverie. He resolved to stake five shillings more. He put half-a-crown down upon the yellow : it was red. The other half-crown followed : it was black. He now seemed desperate. He tried the black, and won ; but the black merely covered the stake. He tried the yellow, and it was blue ; and then the blue, and it was yellow. Five shillings only had he left. Should he stake it all at once, hit or miss ? Down it went ; and in an instant it was lost.

His feelings were agonizing now. He, indeed, felt as if it really mattered not much what became of him. His eyes seemed as if about to start from their sockets. He struck his head with violence ; and, as he left the booth slowly, he could not refrain from shedding tears. The greatest trouble physics all the rest. His previous losses now seemed as nothing. He might have got over them with comfort ; but, how was he to get over this ? All the money he had was gone, including that which he had borrowed of the amiable cook, and he had the whole of his wet bets to settle, and promptly, too, in order to sustain his reputation !

While lost in the thought of this his afflicting position, he encountered a creature who had a table, with twenty or thirty sovereigns thereon, and three thimbles, surrounded by divers individuals, who were betting upon the wonderful discovery of a pea. Bob had frequently heard of this game : he well knew it to be a dirty and disreputable swindle ; and yet the thing appeared to be so simple, while the creature who presided seemed so bungling, and moreover, so excessively blind to his own interest, that in more than one instance would he have put down a stake had his pockets not been quite so hungry as they were. He could tell where the pea was, beyond all dispute. It was *proved* that he could, for a gentleman who stood beside him, and who had not sufficient confidence in his own judgment, asked him which thimble he thought the pea was under ; and, having pointed out one, the gentleman threw down a sovereign ; and under that identical thimble it was ; and, when

the pea was again adjusted, and the gentleman had again appealed to him, another sovereign was staked, and he was, of course, right again.

Bob, however, was very much vexed at this. Two sovereigns had been won through his instrumentality; and, although it was all very well to win money for others, he naturally thought that it would have been better had he won those two sovereigns for himself: which he might have done of course!—there could not be two decent opinions about that; and, therefore, feeling that the fellow was essentially stupid, or, at all events, not quite *au fait* to the trick, he ran to borrow half-a-sovereign of the coachman, and returned to the table, full of hope. The gentleman who had successfully appealed to him was still betting; and, when he lost, he appeared to lose most foolishly, seeing that he invariably fixed on the thimble under which Bob was sure the pea was not. He therefore applied at Bob again; and Bob again pointed to the right one, and was complimented highly upon the extraordinary quickness of his perception; and then it was he tried for himself. He saw the pea distinctly placed under the thimble in the middle; he could have sworn to it conscientiously.

"I'll bet half-a-sovereign," said he, producing his all.

"Bet a sovereign," cried the creature. "Put a sovereign down. I don't mind about losing a sovereign!"

"No; only half," said Bob. "Don't touch it."

Very well. The money was placed upon the table, and covered: the thimble was raised, and the pea was *not* there!

Bob looked at the fellow with great ferocity. He also looked ferociously at the man who had urged him on. He half suspected him of being a confederate; and had he been sure of it—quite sure—with all the pleasure in life would he have thrashed him; but he was not; and therefore, all he felt justified in doing was to give free vent to his indignation, which he did in terms which he deemed appropriate; and having consigned the whole gang to the torture of their own consciences, left them with a feeling of unspeakable disgust.

"Well," said he, as he returned, with a truly wretched aspect, "there's another half-sovereign out of me. What is this world when you come for to look at it? What *is it* but a out-and-out den of blessed thieves? Fortune! blow Fortune! what do I owe her? *Aint* she been against me all along? Did ever any fellow have such pleasant luck as I've had? I'm a fool—of course I know that I'm a fool, 'cause I was quite conscientious that the pea dodge was a do. Who's to blame, then? Don't it just serve me right? Is there any pity for me? Not a ha'p'orth."



This last observation was made by way of solace ; but the comfort it imparted was not strikingly apparent. He still held that he had been cruelly ill used, and hence became more dreadfully dejected than before.

All were now becoming anxious for the last race, save Bob. He really cared but little about whether he won or lost. He was in that frame of mind, the indulgence of which is extremely illaudable, and highly pernicious, inasmuch as it reduces a man at once to that point of despair which prompts him to repudiate the employment of the power at his command, with the view of surmounting those embarrassments in which he may be involved. This is indeed a disease—a most ruinous disease, and one for which the only immediate cure is a little unexpected success. Then, he who was gloomily apathetic becomes active ; his dormant energies are roused : he sees his error, and gladly embraces those means to which he before closed his eyes, and that wilfully, being conscious of their existence. The bell rang, and the race commenced. He took no interest in it. When it was over, he just glanced at the paper carelessly. Why, he had drawn the very horse ! He could not have supposed it possible. He had thought that nothing in life was more certain than that every earthly thing was going against him. On receiving the sweepstakes, he therefore felt his heart lighter, and his spirits rising rapidly ; and, when Sir William, to whom he had been particularly attentive, presented him with a sovereign, he really began to believe that his case was not nearly so desperate as he had imagined. Still it could not be concealed that he had lost a heavy sum ; and he was just on the point of entering into an abstruse calculation touching the total amount, when Stanley called to him, and gave him instructions to take the horses quietly home.

The posters were then immediately put to, and in five minutes the widow's carriage moved off the Downs. Bob lingered : he scarcely knew why ; still he lingered ; and, as he was standing thoughtfully between his horses, a friend of his approached, and informed him that he had that very instant won seven half-crowns at a "gold and silver table," to which he pointed, and which stood but a few yards from the spot. On receiving this momentous intelligence, Bob looked at his friend, as if to be sure that he was totally unconnected with the scheme,—being inclined at the moment to make every man an object of suspicion, and, having satisfied himself on that particular point, he got a boy to hold his horses, and repaired to the table in question without delay. At this establishment a gaudily-dressed female presided ; and, although she was not

extremely beautiful, the purity of her complexion, such as it was, was duly protected from the sun by a comprehensive umbrella. She stood in a commanding position, upon a stool, with a rake in one hand, and a white cotton cabbage-net, nearly filled with silver in the other, while on the table, which was emblazoned with all sorts of brilliant prizes, stood a dice-box of a Brobdignagian build, and divers large—and of course, unloaded,—dice; and ever and anon she screamed, in tones which bore an ear-piercing resemblance to those of a cracked clarionet in the hands of a man who knows no touch thereof,—“Now, who’s for the next prize! A shillin’ a throw, or three throws for arf-a-crown. I’ll warrant all the prizes to be on the dice. The extent of your losses you’re sure to know: the extent of your winnin’s you can’t. When I lose, my losses is heavy: when you lose, your losses is light!”

“Well,” thought Bob, “it’s quite out of nature to be much of rig in this. I only want to win a pound! I’ll *have* a try. See if I don’t. It *will* be very hard if I can’t get something!”

He accordingly subscribed half-a crown to the concern, and having placed the dice in the box, boldly threw them, when the lady began to count with surpassing velocity, “Six and six is twelve, and four’s nineteen, and five’s twenty-seven, and three’s thirty-four, and one’s forty-five, and four’s fifty-two, and five’s fifty-nine, and three’s sixty-five, and four and four’s eight, and six is seventy-two! Sixty-two is a prize of five crowns; but seventy-two’s a blank, as you see.”

Bob certainly saw that seventy-two was a blank; but he did not exactly approve of this rapid mode of counting. He had not been at all used to it; he couldn’t keep up with it; and, as he did entertain a vague notion that she had in one instance made a slight mistake, he determined on counting them himself the next time, and threw again: and again the lady’s tongue went to work, like the clapper of an alarm-bell, and wouldn’t stop until she had reached sixty, which, of course, was a blank. Bob, however, was not satisfied. He began to count himself; but, as he proceeded, the lady joined him, being anxious to render him all possible assistance, which so effectually confused his intellects that he found himself utterly unable to count at all. Assuming, therefore, on compulsion, that she was right, he threw the third time, and threw forty-eight, which the experienced eye of the lady soon detected, and she ingeniously made fifty-six of them, in consequence of forty-eight being a prize of three sovereigns. But Bob could not make fifty-six: he insisted upon having time; when the lady leered affectionately at two gentlemen, who were standing by,

and who, as they perceived that Bob was going on steadily, made a sudden slight, but, of course, purely accidental rush ; and, while one of them was making all sorts of apologies, the other dexterously turned over one of the dice ; which the lady no sooner perceived than she exclaimed with great propriety, "What's all this about? What do you interrupt the gentleman for when he's a-counting? You ought to know better. Go on, sir ; pray do ; and take your time about it."

Bob accordingly counted them again, and then said,

"There, I knew you was wrong : there's only fifty."

"Very well, sir. I'll take your word for it. We're all on us liable to error ; human nature can't be perfect. Whatever prize it is, you shall have, sir. Fifty. Only two too many, sir. Try again : don't be down-hearted. Forty-eight's a prize of three pound. Fifty, you see, is a blank."

"Why, it *was* forty-eight," said Bob's friend, "before that man there made a two a four!"

In an instant the hat of the individual who had thus spoken mysteriously dropped over his eyes. It was not at all too large for him ; on the contrary, it was rather a tight fit ; but the brim on either side, nevertheless, did come down upon his shoulders, as if by magic. Bob in a moment saw how the case stood ; and, being anxious for his friend to appear to give evidence, flew to his aid ; but he had no sooner done so than his own hat went down in the same most remarkable manner.

Now it is extremely difficult, under these peculiar circumstances, for a man to face the world. He cannot raise his hat with either promptitude or comfort. Should he happen to have anything at all of a nose, the tip thereof is certain to catch in the lining. To the ancient Romans this would have been abundantly manifest ; and, probably, the children of Israel of this our day wear gossamers without any lining at all on this very account. And none can blame them. The position is excessively disagreeable. A man is extinguished. The light of his countenance is gone. He looks like a decapitated individual, feeling in his heart for the thoughts in his head.

By dint of some extraordinary and perfectly original wriggling, Bob eventually managed to appear ; and when he did so, he shook himself, and looked round fiercely ; but the gentlemen whom he had calculated upon seeing had vanished ; and it was, indeed, fortunate for them that they had ; for it may with perfect safety be recorded that, could he have grappled with them then, the irregularity of the features, of one of them at least, would have been truly conspicuous.

In vain the lady declared that no die had been turned ; in vain she pledged her honour that she never beheld those two

gentlemen before in the whole course of her life. Bob would not believe her ; and he told her so flatly, and rated her well, and put it plainly and distinctly to her whether she ought not to be ashamed of her conduct ; which seemed to touch her rather, for she instantly observed that, as he was not exactly satisfied, she would consent to his having another throw gratis.

"Another throw!" cried Bob, with an expression of scorn ; and he really was very much disgusted with her behaviour. "I'll not have another throw ! I'll have nothing more to do with you. Now I know what you are, if I was to go for to win the smallest mite of your money I should think myself poisoned !"

And, hereupon, he quitted the spot with his friend.

He now clearly saw that the man who, being pecuniarily involved, seeks to retrieve himself by gambling is a fool ; and, having made an exceedingly laudable resolution to profit by the experience he had purchased that day, he proceeded towards town, deeply buried in reflection, for how the cook was to be paid, and how his heavy half-and-half, ale, and brandy-and-water losses were to be settled, were mysteries which had still to be solved.

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## CHAPTER XX.

DESCRIBES THE PERFORMANCE OF A PHAETONIC FEAT, WHICH BRINGS BOB INTO TEMPORARY TROUBLE.

At the appointed hour the following morning, Stanley called upon Sir William, with a view to an arrangement of their books, and the result proved that Stanley had lost to Sir William about four thousand pounds, and had won of Major Foxe two thousand eight hundred. This to Stanley was a most unsatisfactory result. He, of course, knew before that he had lost ; but he had certainly no idea of being a loser to the extent of twelve hundred pounds. He, however, appeared to care as little as possible about it ; and when the honourable Baronet expressed his sorrow at having won so much of him, he entertained him not to feel at all annoyed at that circumstance, which was perfectly supererogatory,—and begged of him to accompany him at once to the United Service, in order to assist in the settlement with Major Foxe. To this Sir William politely consented, and they repaired to the United Service, and inquired for Major Foxe of the porter. Major Foxe ! Why, of course, he was not there ! Of course they knew nothing of him !—of course he did not, and never did, belong to the Club !

"Why, surely the fellow could not have assumed that name to deceive us!" cried Stanley.

"He certainly said the United Service," observed Sir William, who affected to be greatly surprised. "Is it possible, think you, that he meant the Junior United Service?"

"Oh! very likely! I thought he could not be quite so barefaced a scamp!"

They then went to the Junior Club; he was not known there. They examined the Army List minutely; he was not to be found. In short, there was no Major Foxe in the service.

On making this discovery, Stanley said indeed but little; but Sir William, who had had just as lively an anticipation of the event as if he had actually been a confederate of the Major, denounced him with unexampled energy. He was a scoundrel, a blackleg, a villain, a swindler! he was everything, in fact, but an honourable man. Stanley, however, still preserved comparative silence; and on returning to the Albany, left the indignant Baronet, having engaged to dine with him at seven.

Four thousand pounds! It was a large sum for him to lose, and that in one day! But the money must be paid: whether Major Foxe were or were not to be found, Sir William must have the amount he had won; and, being impressed with the necessity for an immediate settlement, Stanley proceeded to the house of the widow, whom he found in a pleasing reverie, recounting the delights she had experienced the preceding day.

"Mother," said he, after the customary greeting, "you must let me have some money."

"Very well, my love. Let me see, you had a cheque—when? However, you have not spent it unnecessarily, I dare say; but, if I give you another now, you must make it last a very long time; for you know we have both been extravagant of late.

"I am sorry," said Stanley, "to require so much at once; but I must have, mother, four thousand pounds."

"Four thousand! Why—four—good gracious! my dear, what on earth can you want such a sum for?"

"To pay a debt of honour," replied Stanley, with great calmness.

"What, did you lose four thousand pounds at the races? My dearest boy, to whom!"

"To Sir William," said Stanley, and the countenance of the widow instantly changed.

Had it been lost to any one else, of course the thing would have been very different indeed; but as it was, why, what in her judgment did it amount to! It would be still in the family! It was not like an actual loss—it was only like taking money out

of the right pocket, and putting it into the left. This she felt, and hence her reply was, that certainly the money must be paid.

"But," she added, "how came you, my dear boy, to bet to such an extent? For goodness' sake, never bet again so largely. We shall be ruined—we shall indeed, if you continue to go on so. But I thought, my love, you won of Major—what's his name?—Foxe—ay, Major Foxe?"

"So I did. I won two thousand eight hundred pounds of him, and lost four thousand to Sir William."

"Oh! then the case is not so desperate! Then, if I give you twelve hundred pounds, that will do to settle all?"

"Is Sir William to wait till I get the money of the Major? Is he to suppose that I cannot pay him until the Major pays me?"

"Not for the world! No—he must be paid at once."

"Of course; and when the Major settles with me, I'll hand the amount over to you."

"Exactly. That will be perfectly correct and straightforward. But I have not so much at the banker's. Let me see—how can it be managed? When do you meet Sir William again?"

"I have promised to dine with him to-day."

"Dear me! Then I must run away at once into the city. I'll be back by four o'clock. Call then, and you shall have it."

"Very well. But there is one thing you must promise me, mother, and that is, that you will not name a word of this to Amelia. It can do no good, and may make her unhappy, and I am sure you have no desire to do that."

"Certainly not. But you must promise me that you'll never, never bet so much again."

"I'll promise never to lose so much again, if I can possibly avoid it. But recollect, not a syllable to Amelia."

The widow assured him that she would not say a word, and they parted, and with an equal amount of satisfaction; for it must, in strict justice to the widow, be confessed that, while Stanley was pleased that he had got over it so well, she rejoiced in the opportunity of convincing Sir William that there was really about her something pecuniarily substantial—an opportunity which she would not have failed to embrace for five times the amount. She, therefore, went into the city with rather a light heart; although she did think that Stanley ought not to suppose that he was at liberty to launch into any extravagancies he pleased.

While Stanley was at home, waiting rather impatiently for the hour of four, Bob was occupied in baring his breast to

Joanna, the gentle and affectionate cook. He conceived it, and very correctly, to be more regular and honourable to explain to her clearly the position in which he stood, not alone because she was his principal creditor, but because she had invariably treated him with great kindness, which he could not but feel, inasmuch as she deemed herself in duty bound to tyrannize over, if not, indeed, to trample upon, the rest of the servants, in order that the contrast might be rendered thereby the more striking. He therefore confided to her, at once, the chief features of his melancholy case; and when all had been explained, he observed with much feeling,

"Now, the bottom of it is, cook, I owe you two pound. I can pay you—just pay you—and I feel justifiable in settling with you first; but if I do, I shan't have a individual copper for to pay my wet bets, which won't look the genteel thing exactly. Now I don't want, you see, to ask master to advance. I don't like it—it don't agree with my digestion. It's a delicate thing, and looks rotten; consequentially, the point in embryo amounts to this—*do* you want this here two pound, you know, before my quarter's up?"

"By no manner of means," replied the gentle Joanna. "But why call me cook? You know I don't mind *you*, Robert, although I don't choose to suffer the rest to come any familiarities. But, in regard of this money, I request you'll not name it. If you was in wants of twenty times as much, I've got so much confidence in somebody, that I don't think that somebody would be very long without it. But how much do you say all these losings will come to?"

"Why, I think three pound ten will about settle the lot.

"And you've only two pound?"

"Oh, but I can easy borrow the rest of old misseses coachman."

"Borrow of nobody, Robert, but me. Don't have too many creditors; don't let too many know how many secrets goes to an ounce. In the present deplorable state of the world it isn't wise. Here's thirty shillings; that'll make it up. Come!—you shall!—I insist! If you want any more, why, you know where to make the application."

This was kind—Bob could not but feel it to be very kind, while the confidence he had reposed in Joanna made her heart leap for joy; for, although she had had recourse to every ingenious manœuvre, having a tendency in her view to convince him of the strength and virgin purity of her affection—although she had done, indeed, all that the delicacy of her nature could sanction, to inspire him with a perfect appreciation of the character of that vital spark with which she longed to set his heart

in a blaze, she had never till then felt quite sure of success. She had, theretofore, conceived him to be excessively dull on this interesting subject, and that dulness had indisputably outraged, to a painful extent, her refined sensibilities; but then, being conscious, not only that wealth induced favour, but that favour was the legitimate germ of affection, she could not, nor did she, indeed, wish to disguise from herself, that in the garden of his heart she had planted this germ, and hence, fancying that she had but to cultivate it tenderly, proceeded to explain to him, with much poetic feeling, that she had a mass of money in one of the savings' banks to a highly respectable tune, and that she thought most sincerely, that such mass would go far towards enabling a comfortable couple to commence in the independent green-grocery line, if, indeed, it would not, with the aid of a brewer, establish them at once in a public-house of respectability, which formed, at that particular period, the very acme of her ambition. Of course Bob's opinions on this subject were bound to be strikingly coincident with her own; and although he did not understand her aim exactly, having no serious matrimonial feelings about him, he continued to converse with her on various matters which had indirect reference to those feelings, until Stanley again ordered the cab.

As the widow had been detained for some time in the city, she had but just alighted from her carriage when Stanley arrived. She seemed to have been slightly put out about something, but she instantly gave him a cheque for the amount required.

"Why do you give me this thing?" cried Stanley, throwing the cheque down as if it were valueless. "Why could you not bring me the money?"

"A cheque, my love, looks more respectable—ininitely more respectable."

"So it would, with my own name attached; but do you suppose I want the whole world to know that I have to run to you for all the money I want? Your own respectability, mother, you look at, not mine. If a cheque be an emblem of respectability, why not place me in a position to give cheques of my own? Here, it's now half-past four, and I must go galloping down to the banker's to get this thing cashed."

"Surely that is unnecessary? What difference can it make?"

"What difference! Why, I would not let him see this on any account! I wish you had a little more thought for me, mother. If you had, I think your affection would be much more conspicuous."

"Stanley!—indeed this is cruel! But you do not—you cannot really mean what you say. If you did, I should be wretched."



My dearest boy! why are you so passionate? You'll break my heart!—I'm sure you'll break my heart, and then you *would* be very sorry, would you not? Yes, I know you would," she added, throwing her arms round his neck, and fondly kissing him, "my boy!"

He returned the kiss coldly, and quitted the room.

Now, the widow regretted all this very much: not only in consequence of Stanley's impetuosity, which she had in his childhood most culpably fostered, but because she had wished that particular cheque to pass through the hands of Sir William. However, as it was, she contented herself with the cherished conviction, that he would, nevertheless, understand and duly appreciate the source whence it came.

Having obtained the cash at the banker's, Stanley in due time proceeded to dine with Sir William; to whom, immediately after dinner—they being quite alone—he cheerfully paid the amount.

Sir William affected to receive it with great reluctance.

"Upon my honour," said he, "I am ashamed to take it of you. I am, indeed."

"Ridiculous!" cried Stanley. "The sum is nothing; and you must not 'lay the flattering unction to your soul' that I am not going to have my revenge."

Sir William was pleased to hear that in Stanley's estimation, the amount was inconsiderable. He was also pleased to hear him speak of having his revenge: still he appeared to be most unwilling to receive it.

"I do not," he observed, "care a straw about winning any amount of a number of friends; but I cannot bear to win so much of one. However, as you insist upon my receiving it, I also must insist upon being allowed to make your amiable wife a present."

"Nonsense! nonsense!" cried Stanley. "I beg you will do nothing of the sort."

"Then, by Heavens! I'll not have the money at all. I may be called a curious fellow, and perhaps I am; but this isn't quite congenial with a certain sort of principle, or feeling, I have about me."

"Why, suppose I had won it of you,—do you think I would not have received it?"

"Not with pleasure. I am sure of it. I know you too well. At all events I'll do what I say. You can but call me out; and, although I am not much of a shot, I'll back myself to fire in the air on such an occasion with any man in England."

Stanley smiled. He had now a much better opinion of Sir William than ever; and, as both were well satisfied, they kept

up a spirited, merry conversation, their full flow of pleasure being interrupted only when Major Foxe happened to be named; on which occasions Sir William invariably felt himself in honour bound to swell with indignation.

At eleven o'clock precisely, Bob, according to instructions, drove up to the south entrance of the Albany, where he waited with the most exemplary patience till twelve, and then fell asleep, and dreamt of his prospects till one, when the arrival of Stanley and Sir William, both of whom were somewhat heated with wine, had the effect of making him leap out of the cab, and to rush to the horse's head, before his eyes were in a positively strict sense open.

"You may as well jump in," said Stanley, on taking the reins.

"Oh, with all my heart," returned Sir William. "The air is refreshing. I'll see you home and then walk back coolly."

He accordingly at once took his seat, and they started, turning the corner as if some great principle impelled the near wheel to graze the glove of a person whose hand was on the lamp-post.

"I'll bet ten to one," said Sir William, on reaching the Circus, "that you don't drive through the Quadrant at full gallop, without touching the pillars on the one side, or the shutters on the other."

"What, on the footpath there under the piazza, do you mean?"

"Of course."

"Safe bet," said Stanley, who continued to drive on.

"Well, I'll tell you what I'll do with you, safe as it is: I'll take ten to one that I do it."

"Done!" cried Stanley.

"In fifties?"

"Ay, in fifties. But the people!"

"Oh, I'll very soon clear the course. You'll see how they'll all fly before us!"

They now changed places. Stanley gave up the reins, and Sir William drove back to the Circus.

"Now, then," said he, "sit firm. Never mind the screams of the women. Hold hard, Bob! Yo-oicks! yo-oicks! tally-ho!" he shouted, driving in by Swan and Edgar's shop. "Yoi! yoi! yoi! yoi!—toloo, toloo, there!—yoi! yoi!"

And away they dashed, while the women were shrieking, and the men were groaning, and the police were running from all directions. At starting the horse was somewhat frightened, and seemed half inclined to bolt out of the course; but as his reckless driver kept a tight rein, while continuing to shout as

if Reynard had been in sight, he went on without a slip, although the flag-stones were nearly as smooth as glass. The task was nearly completed. Stanley's five hundred seemed scarcely worth a shilling's purchase. They had but to pass a few more pillars, and they were out.

"Keep on, sir! keep on!" shouted Bob, "The police!"

This sufficiently startled the hair-brained Baronet to cause him in his efforts to turn sharp into the road, to graze the base of the last pillar and thus to lose.

The angry exclamation which followed convinced Bob that Stanley had given up the reins. He cared, however, nothing for Sir William's anger then, but instantly pulled back the hood to give instructions. The people behind were still groaning with indignation, and the police were still running with great ferocity.

"Keep on, sir! keep on, sir!" cried Bob. "He can do more than that! We shan't beat 'em! There's one on 'em now at our heels in a cab! Take the reins—take the reins, sir!" he added, addressing Stanley, "and then the Prince won't be frightened. That's right, sir! Keep on, sir! Go right into the New Road, and then we'll dodge 'em."

"Can you see them now, Bob?" cried Stanley, on reaching the Crescent.

"Oh, yes, sir! they're just behind us, cutting away as if they hadn't another minute to live. Now to the right, sir! I know every inch of the ground."

Guided by Bob, Stanley went to the right, and in a short time turned to the right again, and then dashed through an infinite variety of streets, turning to the left and right alternately, until they reached Tottenham-court-road, although long before that Bob felt sure of having effectually eluded their official pursuer.

"Well, Bob, which way now?" inquired Stanley.

"Oh, any way you like, sir, now. You can walk the Prince, if you like, sir. They've given up the chase. But I beg pardon, sir, but if I was you, I'd never try that there dodge again. It's a mercy we wasn't all smashed—and I'm sure we knocked some on 'em down. It's a regular miracle the Prince didn't bolt!"

Sir William laughed heartily at this, notwithstanding he had lost; but Stanley, although he had won, felt that Bob was quite right, and was about to confess that justice had nothing to do with their escape, when the horse's head was suddenly seized by a policeman.

"Stand aside!" cried Stanley. "Let go your hold!"

"Not a bit of it!" cried the policeman, who still held on,

until Bob, who had leaped from behind on the instant, threw his coat into the cab, and demanded an explanation.

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Get away from my horse! Don't you see he don't like you? What do you want? Do you hear? *Stand* away!" And he seized the policeman; who, finding the horse becoming unmanageable, relinquished the reins, and at once secured *him*.

Stanley was now about to leap from the cab, but Sir William restrained him, and, as at the moment Bob shouted "Drive on, sir!—drive on! There's more of 'em coming, sir! Never mind me, sir! Drive on!" he somewhat reluctantly gave the horse his head, and dashed away.

Bob made no resistance: nor would he allow the calmness of his spirit to be ruffled; albeit two other policemen came up at the time, and handled him with something like ferocity.

"Behave," said he, "a leetle near the mark, and I'll walk like a gentleman. *I* don't want to cut away from you. It's no odds to me! If you wasn't to go for to hold me at all, I'd walk with you as regular as a lanib."

On this particular point the incredulity of the policemen was rather remarkable. They still held him tightly, and continued to hold him until they arrived at the station, when they placed him behind a piece of wood yclept the bar, and proceeded to introduce him to the notice of the inspector, who, while disposing of a mouthful of a cold mutton pie looked at him with supreme official dignity.

"Well," said the inspector, having listened with peculiar attention to the merits of the case, as portrayed in the opening address, which was somewhat poetical, "and who is your master?"

Bob with great deliberation passed his hand over his chin, and said, "Why——"

"Do you hear me! Who is your master? We are not going to let you stand hatching a lot of lies. Who is he? What's his name. ?Where does he live?"

"Why," replied Bob, who was still unruffled, "under all the circumstantialia of the case, I don't know, you see, exact, that I should be regular justifiable——"

"None of your long speeches here. It won't do. Again I ask, who is your master?"

"You see," returned Bob, with an appropriate gesture, "it's a delicate pint when you look at it deliberate! Reely I don't think it would become me to tell, do you know!"

"But you must tell! That's all about it."

"Well, if I *must*, why the fact of the matter is, I must. There can't be two opinions, anyhow, about that; but it some-

how or another strikes me forcible that I've heard a old saying, which says, you can take a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. Now, that's a predicament : and, it just occurs to my 'magination that, if I make up my mind that I won't tell, I won't ; and, as true as I'm alive, I can't see how you can make me tell legally by law, although, no doubt, such things was done in the days of sanguinary Mary."

"What are you chattering about?" demanded the inspector, who conceiving his authority to be in some degree contemned, began to be really very angry. "Do you mean to say that you'll *not* tell me who your master is?"

"Why I don't mean to say that I won't; nor I don't mean to say that I will; I was only just a-argufying the pint, which seems to me to be rayther knotty."

"It'll be all the worse for you, young fellow! Now, do you mean to tell me, or don't you?"

"I don't see how I *can*, without cutting the throat of that confidence, which ought——"

"Yes, or no! We've had quite enough jabbering. Will you tell me, or not?"

"Excuse me. Not to-night. I must turn the matter over in my mind."

"Lock him up!" cried the inspector,—*"lock him up!"* And, after having as quietly as a dove undergone the operation of having his pockets emptied—the necessity for which, however, he could not then exactly comprehend—he was conducted from the bar into the yard, and introduced into one of the cells.

As far as the abstract process of locking-up was concerned, this met his views precisely; he expected to be locked up; as a matter of course, he expected that; but he did not expect to be introduced into a cell crowded with persons, of whom the majority were in a state of the most bestial intoxication, yet such was the fact. Some were snoring, some were singing, and some were swearing, while the effluvium which prevailed, was not remarkable for its fragrance. Bob felt that this ought not to be. He understood, of course, then, why his pockets had been emptied; but he did think the practice of thrusting all sorts of characters into a place of this kind, indiscriminately, was one which never ought to have obtained. He, however, resolved to make himself as comfortable as the circumstances—of which some were peculiarly unpleasant—would permit; and, having discussed certain interesting points with his conscience, he fell asleep, and slept soundly till the clock struck nine. He was then aroused by the policeman who had charge of the cell; and who, being a decent man in his way, did, with

great consideration, procure him some breakfast, which Bob enjoyed much, and then waited with patience till the hour arrived, at which he and the rest were escorted to the office.

In this procession he had the precedence; and he had scarcely left the door of the station, when a stranger placed a coat into his hands and walked away without uttering a word. Bob recognised the coat in an instant. It was a frock-coat. He had brushed it, he knew not how oft, nor did he care. He put it on with alacrity, and the fit was undeniable.

"Is that your own coat?" inquired the policeman who did him the honour to keep by his side.

"No; the buttons of my own coat tells tales," replied Bob.

"Your master, I suppose, sent it?"

"He who sent it is a trump, and nothing but!" cried Bob, who was proud of the coat, and felt happy. "All right!" said he to himself, in a confidential whisper. "Ain't it a blessing to have a master that's grateful? He don't care about me! What a *pity* he don't!" Hereupon, Bob winked with peculiar significance, and entered the office with a tranquil mind.

Nearly an hour elapsed before his case was called on; and although during the whole of that time he was perfectly self-possessed, on being placed at the bar, and called "prisoner," he certainly did feel in a some slight degree confused. As the case, however, proceeded, his nerves recovered their wonted tone; and when the charge had been made, he pulled down his waistcoat, and held up his head with the air of a man conscious of having a great duty to perform.

"Now," said the magistrate, "what have you to say to all this?"

"Please your worship," said Bob, "it wasn't a act of mine. It wasn't me that drove at all through the Quadrant."

"We know that; but what do you say to the charge of having obstructed the police in the execution of their duty?"

"Why, please your worship, what could I do? I didn't want to hurt nobody. I'm sure I'm of a peaceful dispensation enough; but, when I knew that the police wanted for to collar my master, how *could* I stand that? Suppose you was my master, what *would* you think of me if I suffered you to be taken? *Would* it be at all the ticket? *Wouldn't* you think it unpopular and rotten ingratitude? I rayther think you would, your worship, reely, if you only just put it to yourself in that predicament, and argue the matter cool."

The magistrate smiled, and again consulted the police-sheet, and then said, "Let me see: what do you say your master's name is?"

"I beg your worship's pardon, but I didn't say at all."

"Well, what is his name?"

"Why, your worship, you'll obleedge me by not asking; you will, upon my word; 'cause I don't want to tell any falsity, and I ain't justifiable in speaking the truth."

"But we must know."

"Well, now, reely; I bow, of course, respectfully to your worship; but, if you look at the thing in the right light, as a pint of principle, I don't think that if I was to tell, you'd believe that I'd any principality in me."

The magistrate tried to look grave, but the thing was a failure. He did, however, say, with great apparent severity:

"What if I were to send you to prison, sir, and keep you there until you did tell us?"

"I hope your worship will think better of it," said Bob. "It ain't as if I'd done a single ha'p'orth of injury; nor it ain't as if it was me, you know, as drove upon the pavement, which, if I must speak the sentiments of my mind, is a thing I wouldn't think of doing myself; and, though the law may say I didn't ought to have touched the police, but ought rayther to have assisted him in collaring of master, your worship will see that such a law is right clean against Nature; 'cause if I'd a-done that, I should a-hated myself regular: I couldn't a been off it."

"You are fined five pounds," said the magistrate; "and tell your master, from me, that his conduct is disgraceful."

Bob bowed; and as he left the bar a solicitor, whom Stanley had engaged to watch the case, placed in his hand the required sum, with which the fine was duly paid, and he was at once set at liberty. Sir William, who, although unperceived by him, had been in the office, now presented him with a sovereign; and as on reaching home Stanley made him a present of five, he could not but feel that Fortune, smiling sweetly upon him, had designed the whole thing with no other view than that of getting him out of those pecuniary embarrassments in which he had been so deeply and so painfully involved.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE RECONCILIATION.

THE efforts of General Johnson to effect a reconciliation, had been so perfectly successful, that he called, on the morning of the event just recorded, to invite Stanley and Amelia to a quiet family dinner, gently hinting that they were not to feel in the slightest degree amazed if they met certain persons whom they

honoured. The intimation was, of course, in an instant understood; and nothing ever surpassed the fervid, heart-stirring eloquence with which Amelia poured forth her thanks. The General, although overjoyed at having accomplished his object, could scarcely refrain from shedding tears. Every word touched his feelings as a father; every sentence went directly to his heart. Nor was Stanley unmoved. With all his faults, he loved Amelia most fondly. He could not bear to see her afflicted. He might be thoughtless; he might neglect her—and his neglect was attributable to thoughtlessness alone: but a gentle tear from her would wound him more than the most severe reproof that could be uttered. In this instance, he knew that her tears were distilled from a feeling of joy; yet he could not endure them; and, as all his serious efforts to check them failed, he had recourse to that species of irony, which tends to make troubles seem less, by virtue of painting them greater than they are.

"My love," said he, "this is indeed a dreadful day. Can the General be really a friend, to bring this great calamity upon us? What the result of his polite invitation may be, one can't think; but is it not your impression that it ought to break our hearts? Come, come, you silly girl! You should smile, not weep. Tears should be tolerated only with troubles; they should never be permitted to dim a happy prospect: General, should they?"

"You are a good fellow, sir," said the General, pressing his hand. "I admire you, sir. You have an angel for a wife, and you know it."

"Yes," said Stanley, playfully, "she is very fair, considering. Her government is, however, extremely tyrannous."

"That's right—quite right: keep a tight rein, my girl, and then he may do. He is a wild young dog, and requires to be looked sharply after. However, if you mind what you are about, I think it possible that the favourable opinion I have formed of his character, will be lasting."

"General," said Stanley, "for the interest you have taken in Amelia, accept my warmest thanks. She is a good girl; and I cannot but think, that for her sake, the Captain might have felt himself justified in meeting us before."

"My dear Stanley!" said Amelia.

"Do you want to spoil all?" cried the General. "Not another word on that subject. Take my advice. But I'll leave him in your hands," he added, addressing Amelia. "You must instruct him that the less he says about that the better. Adieu! Remember six. Depend upon it all will be well."

The General then left; and the moment he had done so,



Amelia commenced her task of prevailing upon Stanley to say nothing displeasing to her father—a task which she accomplished with ease.

“For your sake, my dearest girl,” said he, affectionately, “I will on that point be silent. I, of course, perceive that it might produce an unpleasant feeling, and will, therefore, not indulge in a single word.”

From this time, until six, Amelia was lost in contemplation. She endeavoured to think herself happy, but her happiness was then most imperfect. Her feelings of delight were mingled with those of apprehension, both struggling for the mastery, but neither gaining the ascendant.

When the time for their departure had arrived she became still more nervous. The blood left her cheeks, and she trembled with violence on the carriage being announced. Stanley tried with the most affectionate zeal to cheer her. He strove to convince her that her father's object was not to inflict an additional wound upon her feelings, but to heal that which his anger had already adduced. Still she dreaded to meet him, and became so tremulous on reaching the General's residence that she had scarcely sufficient strength to alight.

“Courage—courage, my dear girl!” cried Stanley, as he placed her arm in his, and led her gently into the house. “You are not my Amelia to-day!”

Another effort was made to assume an air of calmness, and they were received with the most cheering warmth. Miss Johnson, with the familiar love of a sister, took Amelia at once under her own especial care, and exerted her enlivening influence with some degree of success. Stanley was under the command of the General, who marched him into the library, and remained to entertain him until Captain and Mrs. Joliffe arrived, when he introduced the lady into the library, and conducted the Captain at once into the drawing-room, to which Amelia had been led by her affectionate friend.

The very moment the Captain entered, Amelia flew into his arms, which were extended to receive her; but for some moments neither had the power to speak. She sobbed convulsively, while the big tears rolled down his cheeks as he kissed her, and fondly pressed her again and again to his heart.

“My girl!” he cried, at length, “my own dear girl!—for dear you are still to me, my child, nay, dearer than ever. Look up, my love! Kiss me—no more sadness now.”

“Dear papa!” cried Amelia, in tones the most touching. “You will forgive me, papa? Pray, forgive me?”

“I do from my heart! from my soul! Bless you!—bless you both!—be happy!”

A fresh flood of tears was the only rejoinder Amelia could make ; and as her father with the most affectionate tenderness led her to the sofa, the General, who had laid his whole plan, went for Stanley and Mrs. Joliffe, with whom he speedily returned ; and while Amelia was being caressed by the latter, the Captain was shaking the former cordially by the hand, thereby perfectly realizing the conception of the General, who felt that his task was complete.

Amelia was now most happy. Restored to those who, from her earliest infancy, had cherished and loved her most fondly, her heart was filled with that pure joy whose natural element is silence.

During dinner not a syllable was uttered having reference, even remotely, to the cause of their meeting that day. They appeared to be afraid to speak, lest they should happen to drop a word which could be supposed to apply to it. Miss Johnson, however, did eventually go so far as to explain how excessively disappointed she had been on ascertaining that Stanley was married, inasmuch as, in the event of his having been single, what the consequence of her rescue might have been she really could not at all pretend to tell. Upon which Stanley consoled with her in the most happy vein, and she was rallied on the subject by all but Amelia, whose heart was too full to allow her to join them.

The ladies retired early, and their retirement appeared to be the signal for silence. This part of the business seemed to have been altogether forgotten by the General ; he had, at all events, omitted to include it in his plan. He now saw that the grand subject must of necessity be alluded to in some way ; and while he was considering which ought to speak first, Stanley and the Captain were waiting anxiously for each other to begin. At length, the General, by dint of much reasoning—for he remembered no precedent by which he could be guided,—safely arrived at the conclusion that they both expected him to break the ice ; and, as he could not clearly recognise any incorrectness in such a course, he replenished his glass, and resolved to pursue it.

"Well," said he, having taken a deep inspiration, "you understand each other perfectly now, I presume! You consent to receive this desperate young gentleman, and he, in return, consents to act so as to render his alliance a source of pleasure to all concerned. Is it not so?"

"That seems to be implied," said the Captain. "But I have to make one stipulation, which is, that as I have certain scruples on the subject, we must have this marriage celebrated according to the rites of the Church of England, and in an

English church. You will consent to this?" he added, addressing Stanley.

"With pleasure," replied Stanley. "I shall be happy in any way to meet your views."

"Then, from this hour, not a single word on the subject which caused our estrangement shall ever escape my lips. All shall be as if I had given my consent in the first instance; and nothing that I can do to promote the happiness of you both shall be left undone."

"Excellent!" cried the General. "When is it to be?"

"As early as you please," replied Stanley, "perhaps the sooner the better."

"Well, then, let me see," said the Captain, "to-morrow is Saturday—the licence can be procured in the morning. Suppose we say Monday? The thing can be confined to ourselves, and we can all dine at Richmond, and be happy. Shall it be so?"

Stanley at once consented, and the preliminaries were discussed and satisfactorily arranged; and when the arrangement was communicated to Amelia, she experienced the truest, the purest delight.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### IN WHICH STANLEY AND AMELIA ARE MARRIED AGAIN.

INSPIRED with most joyous feelings, Amelia early the next morning began to prepare for her second marriage. Her pleasure being perfectly unalloyed with those delicate apprehensions, which, under circumstances of an ordinary character, are inseparable from the contemplation of marriage, was of the purest conceivable caste. Her spirits were high; her heart was light; while Stanley, in order to increase her joy, addressed her throughout the day as Miss Joliffe, wooed her zealously, proposed to her with playful formality, and spoke of the morrow as the day on which their connubial felicity was to commence. This, of course, could not fail to impart additional delight to her, who appreciated highly every kind word and look. She felt, indeed, truly happy; and the manifestation of that happiness proved that his influence over her heart was complete.

As the widow had been the previous evening informed that Captain Joliffe and his lady considered her presence at the ceremony indispensable, she, too, was excessively busy all the morning, being firmly resolved to create a favourable first

impression,—a resolution which invariably rendered the undertaking immense. By virtue of great perseverance, however, she on this occasion did achieve the preliminary object in view with comparative tranquillity and ease, and that, moreover, so early, that after having poured an additional stream of instructions into the comprehensive mind of her maid—who, when anything unusual occurred, always had a fine time of it—she entered her carriage with the view of dining with Stanley and Amelia, as proposed.

On her arrival she was introduced in due form to “Miss Joliffe,” with the idea of which the widow was extremely amused, and she entered into the spirit of the thing with much pleasure, and dwelt with considerable point upon the chief characteristics of the position of the married lovers: which, she contended, was rather peculiar, and backed her views on the subject with much argumentative matter, which had the effect of inducing considerable mirth.

On dinner being announced, a small packet was delivered to Stanley, containing an elegant suite of pearls, the promised present of Sir William to Amelia. Stanley opened it; read the note by which it was accompanied, and then put them both into his pocket, where they remained till after dinner, when he rose, and, having produced them, said,

“My dear Miss Joliffe, I have the almost inexpressible pleasure to inform you that an honourable baronet, whom you hold in respect, and whom my mother very highly esteems—”

“Nay—nay,” interrupted the widow, who blushed very deeply,—“nay, that is not fair now, is it, my love?”

“I beg that I may not be interrupted,” said Stanley, who then resumed, “I have, I say, the pleasure to announce that an honourable baronet has deputed me to present to you a case of pearls, your acceptance of which——”

“Oh! do let us look!” exclaimed the widow. “Pray open them! Do, there’s a dear!”

“What is the use of my rising to make a brilliant speech,” cried Stanley, “if my eloquence is to be murdered by these unseemly interruptions? The opposition is factious. But I pity you—I pity you both; and as I find that you cannot appreciate pure eloquence; as I find that you hold it, in the plenitude of your ignorance—which is dense—to be far less brilliant and attractive than the eloquence of jewels, I scorn to enlighten the minds of such unintellectual ingrates, and therefore at once resume my seat with an appropriate contempt for the gross character of your taste.”

“What dears!” exclaimed the widow, totally deaf to the affected indignation of Stanley. “How excessively elegant!”

And those drops! Dear me, how sweetly pretty! Well now, really! Do pearls become you, my love? Oh! yes; I should say so. And, then, how very—very chaste and quiet! But you do not seem to think so much of them as I do?"

"Oh! indeed I admire them exceedingly," said Amelia. "But is it not singular that Sir William should have made me a present of them?"

"Do not inquire of me," replied Stanley. "I was about to explain all, when I was disgracefully interrupted; but now, why, of course, you cannot expect——"

"Yes, please," said Amelia; "do, there's a good creature! I know you will to oblige me, will you not?"

"Why, as a favour thus specially solicited, I scarcely know how to refuse. But I protest against the exercise of this species of influence. There never was a man so much influenced by his wife as I am by mine, that is to be. It really is monstrous. I have nothing like a will of my own. I am governed as completely as an absolute slave. I submit to it now for the last time. You will understand, madam, that to-morrow I revolt."

"Nay, that will be cruel," said Amelia, who always enjoyed the idea of his being governed by her. "To-morrow will be my own day."

"Another case of tyranny! Well, I'll give you to-morrow; but after to-morrow I shall assume my natural dignity as a man! Now with regard to these pearls, Sir William happened to win a little money of me at Epsom; which money he declared that he would not receive, unless I allowed him to make you a present. I repudiated the notion, of course; but eventually, in order to induce him to take it, I tacitly consented, and behold the result!"

"Well, really! Oh! how very honourable!" cried Amelia. "Do you believe that if you had not consented he would not have received this money at all?"

"I believe this," said Stanley, "that if he had received it he would have made you a present, whether my consent had been obtained or not."

"Well it, at all events, proves him to be a man of strict principle. It is really a very elegant present! But I scarcely know how I am to thank him."

At this moment a servant entered with a packet of about the same size, addressed to Amelia, which she opened, and proceeded to read a note it contained, while the widow and Stanley re-examined the pearls.

It is probably remarkable that the widow on this occasion was not in such raptures as she might have been, considering.

It is true, she was pleased at the manifestation of that honourable principle by which she had ever supposed Sir William to be actuated ; still she did feel, and strongly, that if the pearls had been presented to *her*, it would have been a different thing altogether ; and so it would.

"My dearest girl !" cried Stanley, on perceiving the tears in Amelia's eyes, "what has happened ?"

Amelia handed him the note, which he read, and then exclaimed,

"Well, this is truly dreadful ! The Captain," he added, addressing the widow with great solemnity, "has presented Amelia with a set of brilliants to wear to-morrow ! Now, isn't that appalling ? Return them, my love : by all means send them back. Do not keep them, on any account. I wouldn't have them for the world. It's quite shocking !"

Amelia smiled through her tears, which were those of pure affection, and having kissed the case fervently, displayed the sparkling gems. The pearls were, of course, in an instant eclipsed. Had the brilliants been but paste, they would in her view have thrown *them* at once into the shade ; but as they were in reality brilliants, her delight was unbounded, and she viewed them with pride.

And then, the widow. Oh ! nothing in her judgment could surpass them in beauty. She had a set, it was true, but they were not to be compared, in point of splendour, with those. Still, she must say, that she greatly preferred sapphires herself, and announced it distinctly to be her settled conviction that, if she were ever again tempted to make a purchase of the kind, lovely sapphires would be chosen ; they were so dazzling—so strikingly dazzling ! they were *dears* !

Of course she and Amelia, impatient as they both were to witness the effect of these jewels, soon after this retired ; and immediately they had done so, Stanley, who well knew the widow's feelings, and who had watched the emotions these presents had induced, left the house, and having purchased a suite of sapphires, and requested them to be addressed to his mother, and sent to her residence forthwith, returned with so much expedition, that neither the widow nor Amelia had the slightest knowledge of his having been out.

Now, in history, both ancient and modern, coincidences are recorded of a strange and remarkable character ; but it is extremely questionable whether one can be found upon record more strange or more remarkable than this, that at the moment these sapphires were being delivered at the door of the widow's residence, a handbox arrived at the door of Stanley's. This handbox—to which nothing in the recognised annals of hand-

boxes comparable in point of dimensions exists,—did produce a most extraordinary sensation. It was addressed to Joanna, and highly ingenious and conflicting were the conjectures which sprang from her utter inability to tell who had sent it, and what it contained. She did, however, eventually raise the lid, and with joy beheld a bonnet of deep interest, and of the Tuscan order of architecture, powerfully trimmed. Oh! with what rapture she gazed at its shape; with what exalted satisfaction she guessed what, in its native nakedness, it cost,—fixed mentally the price of the ribbon per yard, and dwelt intensely upon the texture of the curtain behind. But who on earth could have sent it? *That* she naturally held to be a highly-important question; but the mystery in which it was involved was so dark, that in her view it seemed to defy all solution. She laboured to solve it zealously; she taxed her teeming memory, and racked her rich imagination to the utmost, but in vain; it appeared to be utterly impossible to be done, and she was just about to give the thing up in despair, when she was struck with an idea that it was Bob. But then she considered that Bob had no money. She, notwithstanding, turned and looked at him as he sat with his right elbow resting upon the back of his chair, and his forefinger placed upon his temple, while his merry eyes twinkled with pleasurable pride; and, as she looked, she saw *that* in his expression, which induced her on the impulse of the moment to exclaim, “Oh! Robert, it was you!”—when, as Bob did not deny the soft impeachment, but, on the contrary, smiled and seemed delighted, she flew to him, and thanked him, and shook his hand warmly, and could have kissed him, but didn’t.

In the midst of our errors how frequently does it occur that we are correct; and when we are, how refreshing is the conviction! how pleasurable—how beautiful are the feelings of which that conviction is the germ! It is true—too true that, by virtue of some inscrutable perversion of judgment, we often delude ourselves into the belief that we are right when we are wrong; but this wasn’t the case with Joanna. She was perfectly correct. Bob did buy the bonnet; and had sent it, in order to mark as strongly as possible his sense of her politeness—a fact of which she no sooner became quite conscious than she was amazed!—overjoyed, but amazed!

“I hope,” she observed, when her pulse had subsided to about eighty,—“I sincerely hope you haven’t been a-borrowing of money for to make me this beautiful present?”

“Not a bit,” replied Bob—“not a bit. I’m in funds of my own.”

This created another mystery in the mind of Joanna. How

he had become possessed of these funds she really could not conceive. It was, in her gentle judgment, most strange. It was so sudden.

At length Bob, who had some knowledge of human nature as developed in the deep recesses of respectable kitchens, perceiving that her native curiosity had been awakened, said, "You wonder, I dare say, now, where I got this money; and it's natural. But I don't mind telling of you candid. It's presents. Sir William gave me one sov., and master—which is a grateful trump—give me five."

"Indeed! Well, you know, I'm never curious, and so, of course, I'm not at all ambitious to know; but what could they possibly have made you such handsome presents for?"

Bob's notions of honour were high; and as, by the code which he recognised, he felt himself bound to keep his master's secrets faithfully within his own breast, he replied that he trusted that she would look at the thing strictly in the right light when he informed her, that the implied obligation he was under not to explain, he held to be sacred.

"Well, of course," said Joanna, "I've no right to ask, nor I don't very particular wish to know; but I hope that this isn't a reward for the disguise of any clandestine intrigue? I mean, I hope, there's no lady in the case?"

"Why, you don't for a minute suppose such a thing?"

"Why, no, I don't suppose that it is so; only, if it is, missis ought to know it. You know nothing of that kind, Robert, ought to be kept away from her!"

"Don't injure your health upon that score; there's nothing of the sort: not a bit of it. Besides, is it likely? I should like to see her which could come up to missis. I never see one, and I've seen a few in my time. Why there's more of the lady in her little finger than there is in the whole bodies of your fine flashy dames, which depends upon di'monds and paint. Mark my words, they'll never cut *her* out and try *all* they know. She'd be the one for my money, if I was a gentleman. She's my fancy all over. Just the lady I should choose."

Joanna expressed the highest admiration of his taste, which she did not, however, in reality, entertain, for the points of resemblance between her and Amelia—if any, indeed, could be said to exist—were neither numerous nor striking. Still, as Bob had thus set up his standard, she resolved to look into the matter closely, and proceeded at once to ascertain the extent to which they resembled each other; and, albeit, she could not but feel that she had in some respects the advantage over her mistress, she arrived that very night at the conclusion that she



was bound, as a matter of justice to herself, to look as much like her as possible.

The next morning, at ten precisely, the widow, Captain and Mrs. Joliffe, General and Miss Johnson, and Albert, who had been summoned from Cambridge, arrived at Stanley's to breakfast; and the great feature of this meeting was the presentation of the widow to Amelia's family and friends. She had never, of course, been introduced to them before; and while to her the introduction was a source of great pleasure, they were manifestly struck by her appearance, which was singularly brilliant, if not, indeed, blazing. She had been a handsome, and was even then an extremely fine woman; her features were regular and bold; and, although she possessed not that elegance of manner which in them was so conspicuous, her presence was attractive and even commanding. The impression which she made was most favourable; they were all highly pleased with her, and paid her great attention, which naturally caused her to be highly pleased with them. It was, in short, an extremely joyous party, and nothing but happiness prevailed.

At eleven, according to the arrangement made by the Captain, they went to church; and as Amelia entered with her father, she burst into tears, and clung closely to him, and looked at him imploringly, as if she feared that she had been guilty of a greater offence than that involved in disobedience. He tried to cheer her; he pressed her hand and kissed her; and—understanding her feelings—sought to impress upon her mind that she had in reality been married; but his efforts to raise her spirits were but slightly successful. She was deeply affected, and continued to be so during the ceremony, the solemnity of which contrasted strongly with the highly reprehensible levity which marked its performance at Gretna, until Stanley, her soul's idol, repeated his solemn promise to love and to cherish her with an emphasis which produced a thrill of joy.

Immediately after the ceremony they started for Richmond. Stanley and Amelia were in the General's chariot alone; and while the rest were engaged in lauding him to the skies, he was endeavouring to inspire her with cheerfulness and spirit.

"I scarcely know," said he, having partially accomplished this object, "how I am to get you through the world, you sad, sensitive creature! You have no courage at all."

"I have no apprehension while with you," she replied; "because I feel, nay, I know, that you will regard my want of courage as an additional claim to your protection. O Stanley! my dearest love, I am *so* happy!—so very, very happy!—you cannot conceive *how* happy I am?"

Stanley pressed her to his heart, and held her there in

silence until they arrived at the home of her infancy, when her earliest, her sweetest recollections rushed upon her, and filled her heart with rapture. It was the first time, of course, that she had been there since the elopement, and her feelings on alighting from the carriage were delightful in the extreme. Her favourite Italian greyhound, that had been pining during the absence of his gentle mistress, knew her in an instant, and bounded with joy, while the servants, by whom she had ever been beloved, welcomed her back with pure and heartfelt pleasure. She then ran about the house like a child; tried the tones of her harp; struck a few chords upon her piano; looked into all the rooms, and gave a hasty glance at everything with which she had been familiar, until she was summoned to partake of the delicious repast that had been provided, when she rejoined the happy party, but almost immediately afterwards drew Stanley into the garden, where they walked, like children, hand in hand.

The widow and Mrs. Joliffe were inseparable. They were indeed quite delighted with each other, for each met the other's views upon every point, but more especially upon that which had reference to the manly bearing and noble spirit of Stanley. They kept themselves aloof from the rest, their discourse being essentially private and confidential; and while they were engaged in establishing the fact that every mild, gentle, amiable creature ought to have a high-toned man of spirit for a husband, the General and the Captain were settling the point that an amiable, devoted, and affectionate wife was the only thing calculated to keep a high-spirited young dog within bounds.

As for Albert, and the lively Miss Johnson, they were completely shut out from all confidence; and hence, perceiving that they were not in reality wanted, the groom was ordered to saddle the horses, and they started for a ride.

Thus appropriately paired, the party continued to be separated till seven, when they sat down to a most *recherché* dinner, but still more *recherché* was the chaste wit which gave it a zest, and which imparted to all the highest possible pleasure.

Miss Johnson was at all times brilliant, but never more so than when she happened to be assailed. She enjoyed it exceedingly; but would give no quarter: she would never allow her assailant to retreat; if unable to compete with her, she would extinguish him utterly; and to this may be attributed the fact of her being unmarried at the age of thirty-five; for, although she was beautiful, interesting, amiable, and intelligent, and could boast of having had an immense number of suitors, her irony withered the vanity of fools, while it induced wise men to pause, with the view of considering what effect it

might have upon connubial bliss. She had thus scared them all, and was then free as air; but her heart was as light as that element still. On this occasion the General commenced an attack; and most unmercifully, on the ground of her being still a spinster; but she defended her position with surpassing spirit, and was on the point of obtaining a signal triumph, when the Captain came up with his artillery, which the gallant Stanley held to be unfair, and therefore sought to enlist under her banners; but she drove him into the opposite ranks as one of the enemy, and fought them all, and that in a style which was productive of infinite mirth.

In conformity with the telegraphed wish of the Captain—who had previously engaged the widow for the first set of quadrilles, and bade them hold themselves in readiness, as he and the General were resolved to have a dance—the ladies retired unusually early, when the Captain without resuming his seat, proposed, “Health to the bride and bridegroom! God bless them!” He then took Stanley’s hand, and having shaken it warmly, said,

“General, this may be deemed unusual; but the circumstances which have induced it are unusual too. I am inspired with the most happy feelings, and must give vent to them in some way. I am proud, General, as a father I am proud, not only of my child, but of her husband, whom I now more than ever esteem. His conduct this day has been beyond all praise. He has proved that he possesses that excellence of heart which must command universal admiration. I have the highest confidence in him—the very highest confidence; and I feel quite sure that that confidence will never be forfeited. ‘Treat my child,’ he added, addressing Stanley, “cherish her my boy, as a most tender plant. She has a heart which will never prove unfaithful to you, but which may be easily broken. May every earth’y happiness attend you both! May Providence bless and protect you!”

The Captain was here overpowered by his feelings and resumed his seat in tears, and shortly afterwards Stanley expressed his acknowledgments in an appropriate speech of great beauty and point, and concluded by proposing the health of the Captain. Toasts then became the order of the evening. The General proposed Mrs. Joliffe; the Captain, the widow; Albert, Miss Johnson; Stanley, the General; and the General, Albert; when they rejoined the ladies with the happiest feelings in the ascendant; and after coffee, Miss Jefferson—Amelia’s governess, who had been retained as companion to Mrs. Joliffe—went to the piano, and dancing commenced, and was kept up till four, when they all retired save the Captain and the General,

who in the early part of the evening decided upon having a bottle of mulled claret alone.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE SONS OF GLORY.

GENERAL and Miss Johnson left Richmond the next day; but Stanley, Amelia, and the widow, remained there a week; when Mrs. Joliffe, having accepted the invitation of the widow, came up with her and Amelia, while Stanley brought Albert with him.

With this arrangement Albert was especially pleased: the prospect of passing a few days in town with Stanley met his views to a shade; for Richmond, with all its beauties, had but few charms for him. He had, moreover, at that period, a great object in view. While at Cambridge he had associated with certain Sons of Glory, whose poetic accounts of their achievements in the Metropolis had fired his soul; and as some of them happened to be then in town, he resolved to obtain an introduction at head-quarters, in order that, if he did not immortalize himself, he might, at least, do something to astonish their nerves. He, therefore, lost no time in calling upon the chief Son of Glory—the chief, at least, among the Cambridge men,—the Hon Harry Slasher, who was highly pleased to see him, and who appointed to meet him that evening at nine, with the view of showing him “a little real life.”

Accordingly at nine Albert went to the place appointed; and at about half-past twelve a person called upon Stanley, and requested to see him in private. The servant who took up this message delivered it with an air of deep mystery, for he did not exactly understand it.

“Oh! if you please, sir,” said he, “there’s a person below that wants to speak to you privately. He wouldn’t send up his name, because he said you wouldn’t know it.”

“What kind of person? What is he like?” inquired Stanley.

“He is a policeman,” replied the servant.

“A policeman!” echoed Stanley, and the blood rushed to his cheeks, for he thought of the Quadrant. A policeman! What can he want? However, say I’ll be with him directly.”

“Dear Stanley!” cried Amelia, as the servant left the room: “what on earth can it be?”

“Before I can tell you, my love, I must ascertain myself,” replied Stanley, who went down at once, expecting, of course, that his connection with the Quadrant affair had been traced.

"Step this way, will you," said he, addressing the policeman, as he went into the parlour, that the thing might be private. "Now, what is it?"

"I've come," said the policeman, "from Mr. John Jones, a young gentleman that's now in the station. He wants you to bail him."

"Jones!" cried Stanley, who felt much relieved. "I don't know any person of that name."

"Between you and me," said the policeman, confidentially, "it strikes me it isn't his right name, but that's the name he gives."

"What sort of fellow is he?"

"Quite a young gentleman, with light curly hair."

"Oh!—I know him. What, is he tipsy?"

"No; he has been up to that rum dodge of wrenching off knockers. There was no less than eleven of 'em found upon his person, besides a mob of bell-pulls, and several scrapers."

"The young dog!" exclaimed Stanley. "Have a glass of wine; I'll go with you."

The wine was rung for; and while the policeman was helping himself, Stanley returned to Amelia.

"It is nothing of importance," said he, on entering the room. "I shall be back in ten minutes."

"But tell me what it is, pray, do," said Amelia, "and then my mind will be at ease. I shall conceive a thousand fears if you do not."

"Well, well; Albert, it seems, has got into some scrape, and has sent for me in order to get out of it."

"Nothing, I hope, serious?"

"Oh, no; nothing. I have but to go for him, and there will be an end of the matter. It's a ridiculous affair altogether."

"Well, return to me as soon as possible—there's a dear!"

Stanley promised to do so, and, having sent for a cab, he and the policeman proceeded to the station.

On entering the place, the first person whom he saw was the delinquent, who had, as a special favour, been allowed to remain there until his messenger returned; and while Stanley was speaking to him on the subject privately, the policeman whom he had accompanied was transacting some cabalistic business with the inspector, which had evidently reference to the matter in hand.

"You wish to become bail for this person?" said the inspector, at length.

"I do," replied Stanley.

"Are you a housekeeper?"

"Yes: but what is the amount of bail demanded?"

"The usual business—five pounds."

"Well, then, as I am not known, it will be better, perhaps, for me to deposit that amount."

"I am satisfied; but you can do so if you please," said the inspector; and Stanley at once produced the five pounds; and when a document, which touched distinctly upon the production of John Jones's body in the morning, had been read to him with appropriate solemnity, he slipped a half-sovereign into the hand of the policeman, and retired with the said John Jones on his arm.

"What could have induced you," said Stanley, on leaving the station, "to commit so monstrous an act of folly?"

"Folly!" exclaimed Albert. "It's glorious! All our fellows pride themselves upon it. All do it who have a particle of pluck!"

"I have heard of its being done, certainly, by men who have been drunk; but you are perfectly sober."

So much the *more* glorious! That's the beauty of it! Any fellow can do it when he has been drinking; when sober, very few have the courage. It is then, and then only, that the pluck is displayed. But *did* you see them in the corner? There was half a hundred weight of them at least! If it hadn't been for that, I should never have been taken. A fellow can't, you know, cut away so well with a weight like that at his tail."

"Well, but what was your object?—what did you mean to do with them?"

"Do with them!—send them as trophies to head-quarters, through Slasher. You have heard of Harry, of course—Lord Mountjove's son?"

"I don't remember."

"Oh, you must have heard of him. I'll introduce you. There's no mistake *about* him. I know where to find him—he expects me. Come now!"

"No; not to-night. I promised to return immediately."

"Oh, how about Amelia? She, of course, knows nothing of this?"

"She knows that you have got into some trifling scrape."

"Well, we'll soon set that square. But I wish you would come. He is waiting for me, I know."

"Then he prompted you to this expedition?"

"Of course,—in order to qualify myself. By the by, they are going to have a glorious meeting to-morrow! You *must* be there."

"Well, we shall see."

"Oh! you must! I'll call upon Harry directly this business is settled."

"Why, it is settled already. You mustn't appear."

"Not appear!—ridiculous! Do you imagine that *I* care what the old fool of a magistrate may say? He'll fine me a couple of pounds, perhaps, or something of that sort. And what if he does treat me to a lecture? It will, at all events, be known how many trophies I had."

"Nonsense! You must not appear."

"But you wouldn't have me act like a coward?"

"I would countenance no act of meanness or dishonour; but to expose yourself, under the circumstances, were absurd. Besides, although your name would not appear, the thing might reach the ears of the governor; and I presume you would not much like that?"

"Why, I can't conscientiously say that I should."

"Well, let the affair rest as it is. You don't appear. They have got the amount of the bail—that is forfeited of course, and the thing is settled."

But this was a mode of settlement of which Albert did not at all approve; for his associates at Cambridge, although he had been there so short a time, had metamorphosed him from a quiet, studious, gentlemanly fellow, into a hair-brained, devil-may-care, reckless young scamp. He did, however, eventually yield to the advice of Stanley, who, could *he* on all occasions have summoned sufficient firmness to practise the prudence he could preach, would have been far less liable to error than he was.

On reaching home, Albert was severely interrogated, of course, by Amelia; and while he was making the thing "all right and straight," as he termed it, with her, Stanley was labouring to conceive what description of pleasure that of wrenching off knockers in the abstract could be. He felt that its character was peculiar: that he felt from the first; but he could not imagine it to be great. As, however, he invariably assumed that a man must have some specific motive to stimulate him to action, he in this particular instance arrived at the conclusion, that although there might be no delight in the achievement of itself, the most noble, the most beautiful feelings might be awakened by the applause of those who held that achievement to be glorious.

It was this consideration, and a high one it was, which induced him to consent the next day to accompany Albert in the evening. He was anxious to see what description of creatures they were by whom actions of this peculiar description were

applauded; and hence, immediately after dinner, no official declaration touching the contemptuous non-appearance of Mr. John Jones having arrived, he and Albert repaired to the place appointed.

It was dusk when they reached the rendezvous; but few of the Sons of Glory had arrived. Slasher was there, and some others, who, like him, were great among the small; but none of the regularly recognised great men had made their appearance. Of course, Stanley was immediately presented to Slasher, and Slasher was graciously pleased to declare, that he wished he might die if he didn't rather like him; which was highly complimentary, and very good of him, considering.

"We shall have some crack fellows here presently, I presume?" observed Stanley.

"*Out and outers!*" replied Slasher. *Can't* be a second opinion about 'em!—down to every dodge safe as a hammer!—nothing like 'em alive!"

From this Stanley was of course bound to infer that they were very superior fellows indeed, and was about to give expression to his feelings upon the point, when a stunning shout was heard—a shout which made the air tremble, and threatened to shock the nerves of nature.

"Hark! *hark!*" cried Slasher, with an expression of ecstasy, "here they are! here they are! Something new, I'll bet a million! The chief!" he added, on reaching the window. "Let the Earl beat that when he knows how to do it! Hurrah for ould Ireland! hurrah!"

Stanley was at the window in an instant, and saw a well-dressed, powerfully-built fellow, embellished with a coal-heaver's cap, and duly mounted upon a broad-backed dray-horse, preceded by a brass band playing with unexampled fury, "See! the conquering hero comes!" and followed by a travelling carriage built in the very first style, and drawn by eight decent donkeys, mounted by eight postilions, chosen from the smallest sweeps extant. In the carriage sat six intellectual dustmen, and it was extremely interesting to mark the exalted dignity with which they sat, and the gracious condescension with which they occasionally removed the short pipes from their mouths, and spat upon the multitude by whom they were cheered.

This triumphant procession moved but slowly along; for the donkeys, not having been used to the work, could not be persuaded to stick to the collar, nor would they—albeit the postilions, with consummate tact and judgment, sat as near their tails as possible—he prevailed upon to repudiate the habit they had acquired of kicking over the traces. Their inexorable adher-



ence to this little irregularity caused considerable delay ; but although the hero, scorning to go a-head without his suite, turned and waited on every occasion with the most exemplary patience for the re-adjustment of things, the whole procession did eventually reach its destination, amidst the most deafening shouts. The hero then gracefully dismounted, by virtue of standing upon the broad flat back of his charger, calling for three times three cheers, and then leaping to the ground ; and when his friends had alighted from the carriage—the delicate rose-pink lining of which had, in consequence of the grandeur with which they had reposed, become a shade or two darker in places—he and they entered the house with due solemnity of step, and soon appeared in the room set apart for their orgies. Here Stanley was in due form presented to the hero, who presented the half-dozen dustmen to him, and then summoned three waiters, and having with a carving knife slashed off the tails of the coat of the first, and given him a five-pound note to purchase a new one ; he presented the second with a kick, and sent him down stairs for ten pounds worth of silver ; and desired the third to bring up pots of porter, two at a time, continually, till further orders.

The demand for the silver had been obviously anticipated, for the supply was immediate ; and when the required amount, *nominally*, had been poured into the hat, the hero appeared at the window, and was again hailed with cheers.

“A scramble ! a scramble !” shouted the masses below, who seemed to know by instinct that a scramble was intended ; for they instantly squared their arms, opened their shoulders, and elbowed each other with the most perfect freedom. Some held up their hats ; but that the hero wouldn’t have. “Fair play !” he exclaimed, “and no tiles !” and no edict was ever more quickly obeyed.

The scramble then commenced, and the scene which followed was delightful to behold. Prompted by the sweetest and most beautiful feelings of which the human heart is susceptible, the masses dashed after every handful of silver with a zeal which could not in any cause have been surpassed. If we check emulation, we enervate, if indeed we do not absolutely destroy, the comprehensive mind of man ; and as in a scramble, the spirit of emulation is most powerfully developed, it legitimately follows that, for the benefit of the species, scrambles ought to be upheld. This the hero felt strongly, and being deep in the philosophy of scrambling, he on this occasion made his knowledge tell, inasmuch as, instead of strewing his favours right and left, like a man without due discrimination, he directed his attention to one particular point ; and the moment

he beheld a few happy individuals luxuriantly rolling in the mud, he pelted them with diligence, that the rest might roll over them, and thus impart general joy. This, however, is not to be accomplished by an inexperienced hand; it requires great judgment, and a practically acquired knowledge of human nature. It is all very easy, when you have to deal with boys. You may get them down, because their minds are not matured; but when you have to manage a mass of full-grown men and women, with all their faculties about them, and your object is to make them form a heap, so that, in order to regain their position as first-class animals in creation, they may wriggle and twist in and out like a corresponding number of live silver eels, it is absolutely essential for you to have obtained a perfectly clear insight into the workings of the human heart.

As in this particular instance the active energies of a mighty mind were devoted exclusively to the achievement of this great desideratum, the result was the most complete success; and no sooner had the laudable efforts of the hero been triumphantly crowned,—no sooner had he brought about so happy a state of things, that a mighty mass of intelligent beings lay entangled, like the *Gordia* to be found on the banks of the Thames about low-water mark in the mud,—than a heart-stirring, ear-piercing, soul-inspiring shout, announced the near approach of him who stood second in the estimation of the Sons of Glory.

As a matter of fair play, the hero instantly retired, and down came the glorious pageant of his rival. It was headed by a talented company of twelve wooden-legged fiddlers, who had been engaged expressly for this occasion, and who scraped away at the overture to "All round my hat" with surprising precision and beauty; the presence of mind which these professional individuals displayed was remarkable; and as, by one of their articles of agreement, each was bound to wear a shirt with the right sleeve duly tucked up to the shoulder, in order to give the wrist and elbow full play, their appearance was not only unique and picturesque, but rather solemn than not, while the expression with which each particular tone was pronounced was excessively delicate and true. Then followed the second Son of Glory himself, majestically seated in a peculiarly constructed triumphal car, which belonged to a hearth-stone and Flanders-brick merchant, and which was drawn by six thorough-bred bull-dogs, appropriately muzzled.\* As he passed, he was hailed with the purest delight; and although,

\* This was, of course, antecedent to this remarkably aristocratic mode of travelling being prohibited by 2 and 3 Vic., cap. 17, sec. 56.

in point of physical strength, his rival had the advantage, the strength of his moral influence over the multitude, was equal, if not indeed, superior, to his. Of this he appeared to be perfectly conscious; and hence as he rode, strongly supported by a master-sweep at one wheel, and a member of the prize-ring, who was a highly distinguished pick-pocket in his early youth, at the other, his heart throbbed with the proudest feelings a mortal can know. The next point of attraction was his suite, in three mud-carts. This had an imposing effect. It consisted of bricklayers' labourers, with their insignia of office, scavengers, nightmen, costermongers, coach-cads, and sweeps; and if laughter, unrestrained by the shackles of civilization, be indicative of happiness, they were the most happy beings upon the face of the earth. Their joy developed itself in one continued roar. It was enchanting to hear them, and beautiful to see them with the utmost familiarity recognise their friends among the multitude. Oh! there was no paltry pride about them! Nor was there the least about the glorious and gallant Captain whom they immediately preceded, and who brought up a long line of open cabs, crowded with basket-women, street-sweepers, cobblers, and journeymen tailors, who form, perhaps, the most interesting class of the genus to which it is said, as a matter of courtesy, they belong. He was perfectly free from that pitiful sin, and so, indeed, were they all. They all seemed to be inspired with the spirit of independence, which prompted them to treat the conventional forms of society with the most supreme contempt. This, of course, was refreshing. All appeared to enjoy it highly; and so striking and so varied were the distinguishing features of this pageant, that it was on all hands acknowledged that it beat that of the hero into fits.

On arriving at headquarters, the second Son of Glory alighted from his car, when, with the utmost condescension, he proceeded to assist his suite to alight; and, while they who were in the first cart were giving him three enthusiastic cheers, he drew out the pin which secured the body of the cart to the shafts, and shot them out with great ability. The applause which followed this physical development of his moral influence unhappily gave the signal to the rest of the suite, who did *but* turn their eyes, and in an instant it was amazing the activity they displayed. They leaped out of the two other vehicles, some over the wheels, some over the tail-boards, and others over the shafts, with the alacrity of imps; while the anxiety they exhibited when they saw their noble patron approaching, clearly approved it to be a moment of deep interest to them all.

On being defeated, so far at least as the spilling of two cart-loads out of the three was concerned, the noble person philosophically took the arms of his two immediate friends, the prize-fighter and the sweep, walked with great deliberation to the bar of the tavern, and thence—having ordered all the beer his enraptured followers could drink in an hour—proceeded at once to the room of state, where he was cheered very loudly, and complimented highly on the taste, tact, and talent he had displayed.

By this time the majority of the members had arrived, and, as no other pageant was expected, the chief summoned them to the table, and ordered six dozen of champagne to begin with, and, on its being produced, gave "Success to the Sons of Glory!"

This was, of course, enthusiastically honoured; and when the applause had become in a measure subdued, one of the intellectual dustmen was called upon for a song, which he instantly gave with great feeling and grace. His voice was a baritone strictly, but one of extraordinary compass. No tenor could beat him above, no bass could surpass him below; and as, in the course of nature, he unconsciously got into an infinite variety of keys, it might at the time have been rationally inferred that his organ was about a six and a half octave.

Immediately after this excellent song, the vice-president—the second Son of Glory—proposed the health of the chief; a proposition which was instantly hailed with delight, and, when the toast had been drunk, each member turned his glass down and broke it—

The noble chief then majestically rose and said, with all due solemnity: "I'll tell you what it is,—you're a set of trumps, and that's all about it. (*Cheers.*) I know you're all made of the right sort of stuff, and there's no mistake about you. (*Loud Cheers.*) I expect you'll beat the world. (*Renewed cheering.*) I'm not going to give you a long speech, because I hate it; so I'll drink all your jolly good healths in return, and may you always have power to floor the police!"

The conclusion of this display of eloquence was honoured with three distinct cheers, after which three deafening groans were given for the police, whom they naturally viewed with ineffable disgust.

As soon as this mighty demonstration of feeling had subsided, the glorious and gallant Captain, who stood third, proposed the health of the vice, of whose virtues he spoke highly; and when the glasses had been drained, turned, and broken, as

before, the noble second Son of Glory rose and delivered himself as follows :—

“My noble friend in the chair said he hated long speeches,—so do I; and that’s just why I never go down to the House. If, therefore, you expect to have a long speech from me, all I can say is, I cordially wish you may get it. (*Cheers and laughter.*) But to the point. You have drunk my health—thank you!”—that’s as good as cutting away for a month. ‘Brevity,’ as somebody says,—Milton, or Moncrief, or one of those author fellows,—‘Brevity is the soul of wit.’ And it’s devilish good, too; for I like to be brief, and so that’s all about it. (*Tremendous applause.*) But I say!—perhaps we are not getting on!—here are forty of us! It strikes me that we shall soon be enabled to boast the possession of forty tons of knockers in a spacious saloon, with the sides completely covered with door-plates, and festooned all round with double rows of hats captured from the great unboiled. (*Immense cheering.*) What can’t we do? Here’s my friend, the clergyman,” alluding to his right-hand supporter, the sweep, “has undertaken to stop up in one night the whole of the chimneys in Grosvenor Square—”

“And no mistake!” exclaimed the distinguished individual in question. “There’s a mob of pots, no doubt, in that ’ere skweyer; but that’s no odds—they shall all be bunged up, and then *p’raps* there won’t be a *leettle* smoke in the neighbour-wood! *Oh!* no! It somehow or another *strikes* me, there’ll be about enough to make bacon of the whole bilin’!”

Here the “clergyman” gave an interesting wink, and having mixed half a bottle of champagne with a pint of beer, prepared to take a mighty draught as his noble friend resumed.

“Well, I don’t know that I’ve anything else to say. Chummy’s broken the thread. But, however, I’ll give you—success to our order, and down with the police, and a bad night’s rest to Bobby Peel.”

This patriotic sentiment was loudly applauded, and various others followed in rapid succession; but at length Slasher rose, and having introduced Stanley, who was sitting on his right, proposed his health, on the ground that, as their object was to make themselves as powerful as possible, they ought to hail with pleasure the accession of one whose look was sufficient to prove him to be nothing but an out-and-outer.

Stanley’s health was accordingly drunk, and he felt, of course, flattered; but he was not *exactly* the “out-and-outer” they imagined. He had, however, no desire to undeceive them, and therefore rose, less with the view of acknowledging the

toast than of indulging his taste for that refined subtle irony, in which he began to excel.

"You will believe," said he, "of course, that I feel highly honoured, not only by this introduction to the true Sons of Glory, but by the warm, nay I may say the enthusiastic, manner in which my name has been received. The pleasure I have experienced in the society of those brilliant persons whom I still see around me, has been great; but I candidly confess to you that it would have been greater, and far more pure, had their legitimate sphere of action been more comprehensive. I presume that this glorious institution is yet but in its infancy. I am prepared to make every allowance for that; still I must say, that its members do not at present appear to be anything like the trumps I expected to find them."

"What do you mean? What do you mean?" exclaimed the younger Sons of Glory, who panted for the pleasure of calling him out.

"I mean," replied Stanley, "that you have done really nothing to immortalise yourselves. Immortality can never be secured by confining your operations to knockers and bells!"

"They have not been thus confined."

"I admit they have not strictly. You have an elegant variety of door-plates; but where are all the parochial weather-cocks? Policemen's hats and truncheons you have in abundance; but *have* you ever captured an entire suit of clothes? You have stopped up chimneys, extinguished the gas, practised beautifully with the air-gun, and wrenched off an orb; but where is the ladle of Aldgate pump?—where is the shield of Achilles! The royal pigtail still hangs down the back of the Third George; that sublime work of art, the striking statue of the Fourth, stands at King's Cross still; the sceptre of Elizabeth is still in her hand; the bust of her favourite Shakspeare is still in Wych Street; the pepper-box still adorns the Royal Academy; the Mercury of the Morning Post still stands upon the parapet; while the ball and cross are still upon the top of St. Paul's! It is to these things, and all such as these, that I am anxious to direct your attention. Let them be captured, and then we may establish a museum for the private exhibition of our trophies, with the names of the captors emblazoned thereon, that our children and our children's children, nay, even the remotest posterity, may know that we were Sons of Glory indeed."

Before the conclusion of this speech, the fiery malcontents were calmed; but when Stanley resumed his seat the applause was deafening. He had won all their hearts; he was, in their view, a trump of the first water; he had opened to them a new

field of glory, and had thereby created so powerful a sensation, that they immediately formed themselves into committees, with the view of discussing the practicability of the feats he had suggested.

This Stanley no sooner perceived than—it being rather late—he and Albert, without ceremony departed, and, on leaving the house, entered at large into that broad and strongly-marked distinction which is drawn—not by the law, but by those to whom its administration is intrusted—between professional and amateur felons. Albert, of course, would not hear of the “felonious intent;” he repudiated the notion with scorn; but Stanley stuck to it with firmness, albeit he admitted that these amateur felons were men whose gentlemanly feelings and refined sensibilities were so acute, that either of them would, without the slightest remorse, shoot the dearest friend he had through the heart if in an unguarded moment he dared to impugn his honour.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH SIR WILLIAM'S DESIGNS ARE MORE CLEARLY DEVELOPED.

WHEN Sir William originally felt that he might compass the fall of Stanley—when he conceived the design of enriching himself by virtue of reducing him, by “honourable” means, to a state of comparative destitution, he was actuated solely by the vile passion of avarice; but after having seen and conversed with Amelia,—after having been received as a friend, and allowed the privileges of a friend—he was inspired with a stronger passion even than that.

He had proved that Stanley really loved Amelia, and that Amelia most fondly loved him; but he did not despair of being able, eventually, to bring about a mutual revulsion of feeling, by inducing and cherishing inconstancy on the one hand, and a conviction of wrong on the other.

He possessed much subtlety; he had seen much of the world; he had no inconsiderable knowledge of the workings of the human heart, and more especially conversant was he with the evil passions of which it is susceptible. He knew how powerful an instrument the sense of deep injury was in effecting the destruction of virtue by promoting that terrible feeling of revenge, of which the gratification teems with frightful misery: and this instrument he resolved to make available, and to use.

While studying the character of Amelia, while gazing upon

her beauty—that beauty which intellect and purity of soul when conjoined never fail to impart—with an eye whose expression, to one less pure than she, would have plainly portrayed the guilty mind, he felt—he could not but feel—that the attainment of the base object he had proposed would require all the villanous ingenuity at his command ; but this feeling only tended to urge him on the more ; as, in the view of the world, gold is more valuable than other metals, only because it can be with less facility procured, so in his estimation was Amelia to him.

The passion by which he was prompted could not be called love. Love is not an essentially selfish passion. It embraces the peace of the object beloved. Who that loves seeks to compass the ruin of that object ? Will he, with the view to the gratification of any feeling of self, involve her in moral destruction ? No : he will guard her, he will cherish her—her virtue is his pride ; the promotion of her happiness forms the strongest, the dearest wish of his heart ; her honour is as dear to him as his own ; he will lay down his life to preserve it. It was not love. It was nothing like love. It was a grovelling, morbid, sensual passion, springing from baseness, to which love never can be allied. What cared he for the feelings of Amelia ? The eternal destruction of her happiness was his aim ; he sought to wean her affections from Stanley, and Stanley's affections from her, by inducing him to form such connexions as those which undermine domestic peace, and thereby causing her to feel that she was indeed neglected.

His immediate object, therefore, was not alone to enrich himself by impoverishing Stanley, but to draw him into the vortex of vice ; and, in pursuance of this object, he determined on losing no time.

"I think I shall cut you," said he, soon after Albert's departure for Cambridge. "It strikes me that you and I must cease to associate ; for upon my honour you are making me as bad as yourself."

"What's the matter ?" inquired Stanley. "Anything wrong ?"

"Wrong !—why, *you* may not deem it essentially wrong to drag a strictly virtuous man into scenes of dissipation ; but it is, notwithstanding, wrong in the abstract. I admit that my natural disposition is not that of a recluse ; but I used to have a little discretion."

"And do you ascribe the loss of it to me ?"

"To whom else can I ascribe it ? 'Evil communications corrupt good manners.' I am not like the same man."

"I feel flattered, of course," said Stanley. "I scarcely could have supposed that I possessed so much influence."



"It is a disease," rejoined Sir William, "and that disease is contagious. It creeps and grows upon a virtuous man almost imperceptibly; it prostrates his energies for business; it renders study a bore. It may be, and is, doubtless, all very well for you, who have no pursuit, save that of pleasure; but for a man like me, having the interests of the nation in general, and those of his constituents in particular to promote, it becomes a very serious affair."

"So it does," said Stanley, smiling, "and more especially serious to a man who has those interests so deeply at heart as you have. But how have I effected this change? What scenes have I ever drawn you into?"

"I scarcely can tell how the change has been effected, nor need I enumerate the scenes into which I have been drawn. It is sufficient for me to know that I never go into any one of them without you, and that were it not for you, I should never go at all. Now, there's a masquerade, or a fancy ball, or something of that sort to-night; I suppose you have made up your mind to go to that!"

"I have not even given it a thought."

"Nor should I, had it not been for you. But, of course, you will be there?"

"I have no objection to go."

"I knew that. And you would drag me with you?"

"Why, as I should not think of going alone, and as your society is at all times so very agreeable——"

"Exactly. You need say no more. But if I go—however dazzling may be the scene—and I expect that it will be rather brilliant—I leave precisely at one; remember that."

"With all my heart. I have no desire to stop late."

"Of course you have not. You never have. But let us make up our minds to leave at one, or half-past at the very latest."

"Whenever you are ready, I'll be ready too. But, are we to dress?"

"Why it is more of a fancy ball, I believe, than anything else. But we can soon get dresses. Will you call for me at ten?"

"I will; but recollect we leave at one."

Sir William smiled, and having observed it was really too bad to draw him into such scenes, took his leave, with the understanding that they were to start from the Albany at ten.

He had proved that this ironical style was that which told best with Stanley: he had proved that the highest point of his ambition was to be regarded as a fellow of infinite spirit; and that, although he seemed to view the idea of his leading as an excellent jest, he in reality felt flattered. He therefore

resolved to adhere to this style : his first object being to induce the belief that he was fascinated by Stanley, and that he and not Stanley was the victim.

And nothing in his judgment could be more easily created than such a belief. He argued thus : every man has vanity ; every man is vain of the real or fancied possession of some particular quality, and his vanity forms his weak point : assail that point by feeding his vanity, and the man is all your own. He had discovered the weak point of Stanley. He well knew the particular quality of which he was vain, and hence felt quite sure of effecting his ruin, which he held to be essential to the achievement of the grand object he had in view.

Having passed the day with Amelia—who now felt inspired with gaiety and joy, for the reconciliation seemed to have perfected her happiness—Stanley at the appointed hour called upon Sir William, and they soon after started, first to procure their fancy dresses, and then for the gay and dazzling scene.

On entering the spacious and brilliant saloon, which was crowded with persons who appeared to have been attracted from every civilized part of the globe, Sir William, in the costume of a red-cross knight, was recognised by several "foreigners of distinction," whom he greeted, and in due form presented to Stanley.

There was not, however, nearly so much spirit displayed as Stanley expected to witness. The scene was certainly splendid and imposing ; but the characters seemed to have assembled not so much for any present enjoyment as with a view to some prospective advantage. They all appeared to have an ulterior object : the expression of every countenance was indicative of design, which Stanley at first thought strange, but attributing this comparative dullness to the fact of its being yet early, he entered into the business of the scene, and joined the dance with as much gaiety as if the task of reanimating the spirits of the whole assembly had devolved upon him alone.

While he was thus zealously engaged, Sir William was not inactive : he was looking for one who he fancied would be a far more suitable partner for his friend than the lady with whom he was dancing, and having found her, and conversed with her privately for a time, he introduced her in most friendly manner to Stanley, of whom she at once became desperately enamoured. Her first object was to fix him as a partner ; and in this she succeeded, when, as Stanley felt flattered by the preference she displayed, and as, by virtue of having a constant flow of spirits, she made herself extremely agreeable, he had no wish to change, and they continued to be partners during the whole of the evening.

Sir William perceived this with pleasure. It gave him immense satisfaction to see Stanley thus playing his game. He knew that he had placed him in accomplished hands, and felt sure that his seduction from the path of honour had been thereby secured.

"Now," said he, as Stanley and his partner were chatting gaily in the promenade, "you remember : one o'clock."

"I am ready," replied Stanley, "when you are."

"Why—why !" exclaimed his partner, in amazement, "you do not intend to leave yet ! You must not dream of such a thing. I could not possibly part with you. Besides it would be cruel. If you leave, I am resolved to leave with you. But come, pray take me in to supper ? You *will* let me sup with you ? Will you not ? Come ! It is a pleasure I have been anticipating the whole of the evening : you will not deprive me of that."

"There is my guide and governor," said Stanley. "I shall be happy to do so if he will grant permission."

"I knew precisely how it would be," observed Sir William. "I knew that *we* should never get away at one o'clock. However, if we are to have supper, we had better have it now. My partner and I will follow ; but recollect immediately after we leave."

They accordingly repaired to the supper-room at once, and the champagne passed round with great rapidity. The ladies drank with characteristic freedom, and Sir William was constantly filling his glass ; but Stanley, notwithstanding the repeated challenges he received, was unusually cautious.

Of course, after supper the ladies insisted upon having another dance : one more—only one ; they really could not think of leaving without : it was actually indispensable, and as such was assumed to be the case, the consent of their partners was obtained, and they returned to the ball-room, and danced the next set, and the next : in short, they continued to dance until half-past four, when Stanley resolved to quit the scene,—a resolution which could not be shaken.

It was then that Sir William discovered that the project of the evening had failed, for it was then that he ascertained that the partner whom he had selected for Stanley had been unable to prevail upon him to make an appointment, or even to promise that he would see her again. He was, notwithstanding, pleased that he had taken him there : indeed, having on the instant conceived the design of causing a tale to reach the ears of Amelia based upon the fact of his having been present, he fancied that his purpose might be answered as well, although he would most decidedly have preferred Stanley's absolute fall.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## VENERABLE JOE PROMULGATES HIS MATRIMONIAL VIEWS.

As Bob, very early in the evening on which Sir William designed to lay the foundation of Stanley's ruin, ascertained that he should not be again wanted, he put up his horses, made himself truly tidy, and then went to have a few hours' confidential conversation with Venerable Joe, whom he held in high esteem.

Bob scarcely could tell how it was that he respected that venerable gentleman so highly, although it may with perfect safety be attributed to the fact of his morality being strictly correct, while his deportment was perfectly gentleman-like and free; but he certainly did regard him as a very superior sort of an individual, one from whom much valuable knowledge might be gleaned, and with whom a man of honour might associate without having his reputation either tarnished or impugned.

On the other hand, Venerable Joe had inspired an exalted appreciation of Bob's integrity. He *knew* that his moral principles were sound, inasmuch as he had paid like a peer of the realm for the brandy-and-water he lost on the Derby. But, independently of this—although this was the cement, for if Bob could not have paid for that brandy-and-water, their friendship, of course, must have been at an end,—he admired his intellectual acquirements, as he had witnessed their development in the tap, where Bob once actually put a man down who was canvassing the conduct of Alexander the Great; and therefore, whenever they met, they met as friends—bosom friends—friends bound to each other for life.

On this occasion, to show the strength and virgin purity of the friendship which had sprung up between them, Bob no sooner beheld Venerable Joe than he struck a very highly approved pugilistic attitude, and the venerable gentleman struck another, and they sparred with great science for more than ten minutes in really the most affectionate manner possible.

"Vell, my leetle lily!" exclaimed the venerable gentleman, who was the first to drop his arms, "*and* wot is the werdict? Hay! 'ow do you bring it in now?"

"Never better," replied Bob. "How's yourself?"

"*Hif* it warn't for them roomatiz! Them's the on'y things as wexes my sentiments. But ve're all on us safe to 'ave somethink! The best vay's to look at things fillyosophoele, and then they don't seem nothink like wot they are."

"That's somewhere about the average, I believe," observed Bob. "But, how long will it be afore you 're done?"

"Not the space of a instant. Go over to the tap, and I'll be with you in a leetle less than no time."

Bob did so, and was soon after joined by his venerable friend, when they entered deeply into the discussion of various subjects, and eventually touched upon that of matrimony as it stands.

"Are you a Benediction?" inquired Bob.

The venerable gentleman scratched his head, and looked precisely as if a slight explanation would be pleasant.

"A Benediction! You know what I mean, you know. Was you ever married?"

"Not if I know it," said Venerable Joe,—“not a ha’porth of it! No, no; I never vos guilty of that. But why didn’t you put it in the right p’int of wiew? Why didn’t you arst if I ever vos mad? I shoold then a hunderstood it; ’cos to be married is to be mad!”

"Under all circumstantialities?" inquired Bob.

"Why, hif you 've enough, you know, for to keep a missis, and to bring up a whole mob of leetle individuals respectable, it mayn't be so bad; but, onless a man is gifted with a hinde-pendent business he don't ought to do it. He'd better p'ison hisself out-and-out. But *you* never dream of marrying?"

"Why, I don't know; I do sometimes think it would be pleasant."

"Pleasant!" cried the venerable gentleman. "But, in course, you 're on'y joking?"

"No; as true as I'm alive I'm quite serious."

"You are? Then jist let me give you a leetle adwice. Turn the hidear clean out of your 'ed. Don't have it! Marriage is a swindle: it's a reg'lar himposition. It's all wery well, p'raps, for gen'elmen to marry, 'cos, in course, they can wery well stand the hexpence, and it makes good for servants; but for us to think of doing sich a thing! it's no go:—mark my words, it's no go. The gals, in course, have a nat'ral right to ketch us, if they can; but we don't ought to be cotched. It's a dead take in. Besides, marriage spiles the *gals*. Vile you're a-courtin' on 'em, butter von't melt in their mouths: they dress nice, and speak nice, and know how to behave: but, directly you get 'em home they let you know vot's o'clock. That's the p'int. Then instead of sweet vords, smiles, and sutterer, you 've nothink but blowin's up, black looks, and bounce. Then's ven they lets their tongues loose. It's then ven they show off, and lets you see the difference. They know they 're all right. You can't help yourself then. They sets

you at defiance. You may take your change out of it, and go and do your best and your vust: try *all* you know, there's no gettin' rid on 'em. Vot is it, then, but a dead take in? Vot is it but a reg'lar out-and-out himposition? If I buy an 'oss to go quiet in 'arness, and ven I gets him home I finds the warmant full of wice, is it anythink but a swindle? And, vot is it but a swindle ven I marries a gal vich varrants herself to be a good un, and turns out a bad un?"

"But they are not all alike?" suggested Bob.

"I don't know. They're pooty much of a muchness, take 'em out of the kitchen. If you're always flush o' money, you may manage to get along with a few on 'em, *praps*; but the moment you happen to be short, they begin to let out. Cooks, however, them's the warmant! I'll back 'em to beat the world. There! if I had my time to come over agin, and a cook and a bottle of pison vos putt afore me, if I vos obligated for to take either the one or the tother, I'd svaller the p'ison with joy."

"But there's some cooks a decentish sort," urged Bob.

"Not a single individual one among 'em. They're a werry queer lot, and has a lot they do make the most warmentist of wives upon the face of the earth. But s'pose a man does get a decentish one—not a cook, for that's clean out of natur'—but s'pose he *happens* to get hold of a fairish piece o' goods, vot's his 'appiness? Hindependence—the joy of his life's gone. He can't go out arout ketchin' it ven he gets back. If he meets vith a friend, he mustn't stop vith that friend; nayther must he bring him home, onless he vonts for to have him hinsulted. He may call hisself master of his own crib if he likes; but vot a man calls hisself under them there circumstantial is a werry different thing from vot he is. It's the cruellest specie of slavery in natur'. Tork o' the black Africans!—And then the expense: that's another himposition. They tell yer, in course, vere one can live a couple can live. It's a reg'lar do—a cruel do! The expenses is safe to increase. You can't go out arout a doublin' on 'em, no how. On'y try Gravesend jist for instance. Hindependent of the expense of riggin' out—and there's safe to be somethink or 'nother vouted—there's a couple o' shillin's there; that's got to be doubled; a couple o' shillin's back; that's got to be doubled; a couple o' dinners, a couple o' teas—in short, a couple of every hindividual thing. Call for a glass of gin-and-water: why it's gone afore you know vere you are! They can't drink afore marriage. Oh, no! they can on'y jist breathe upon the hedge o' the glass; but *won't* they dip into it arter! And then it's 'Lor! how oncommon fast you do drink! I ain't scarce putt my lips to it, rayley! Vot

are you to do? You can't help yourself! You call for another, vich goes the same road!"

"Is that a fact?" inquired Bob, who was very incredulous.

"The fact, and nothink but," replied the venerable gentleman. "And then comes the kids. P'raps they don't cost nothink! Why, the layin's in alone 'll eat you up. And it's hodd's that they turn out young warmant after all. And if yer don't have none on 'em, then yer not 'appy: yer allus a-vishin' for 'em, allus yarnin' after 'em. And then,"—he continued, with a most mysterious aspect—"then comes the grand p'int! Yer not sure—yer can't be sure—there's nothink to make yer sure! That's vere you feels it. But even if you feels sure, vich is the same thing in the long run, there yer live together, piggin' all yer life up in a loft. And hif you should chance to be throwed 'out o' place, vot a pooty perdicament yer in! And a married servant's allus treated vuss, cos he's tied. He's safe to be imposed upon, cos he can' help hisself. They know they've got him under their thumb. But ven a man's *single*, vot a different man he is! Then's the time he feels hisself independent. He can get a place any vere; and if he's even hout for a time, why, he's only got his own self to look to. Besides, look at the pleasures of a single individual! He gits inwited out. Married men never gits inwited out. And why? Why, in course, cos they're married. It ain't o' no sort o' use to inwite them. They're not to be taken in, cos they have been taken in; and ven they vos, there vos a end of their walue. In my time, I've heered many a married man say, 'So and so's been inwited to sich and sich a party; they might have arst me.' They haven't recollected, at the time, that they vos married, and that that vos the cause. No: they've thought themselves as heligible as they vos afore; but they werry soon find their mistake. Verehas a single man's allus out; he's allus inwited; they can't get on aroud him!—ontil he gets married, ven they find that they can get on aroud him werry well. And this ain't confined on'y to servants, although they're the vust; ve see it hevery day, and in hevery class; from the highest spere of society down to the werry lowest, it's jist hall the same; they inwite men ontill they have passed that p'int, and then they inwite 'em no more. It vexes me ven I see single men suppose that they're inwited cos they're decentish lookin', or cos they're good company. Nothink of the sort! Let 'em marry, and they'll soon find that that vosn't it."

"Still," said Bob, "there must be something in this marriage, after all. There must be something in it more than we know on."

"The married life's loaded with cusses," rejoined his venerable friend.

"But arst them that are married. What do they say about it?"

"Say! They ought to be ashamed of themselves to go for to try to swindle people into the belief that they are 'appy. They ought to know better. That's another himposition. They none on 'em speak the real sentiments of their minds. They on'y do it out of a specie of rewenge. It's on'y cos they're in the mud themselves, and vant heverybody else to tumble in over head an' ears arter them, that's all."

"But you don't mean to say that there's none on 'em happy? Look at my master and missis, for instance!"

"Vell, look at your master—we'll leave out the missis, cos marriage vas 'er game, and she vun it—but look at your master—it's different with genelmen, as I said afore, but look it 'im! Ain't he a hobject of suspicion! ain't the old General been set on to keep a eye upon 'im? ain't hevery move on 'im watched?"

"Is it though, really?" inquired Bob.

"I know it! I know it from our butler, vich is a good feller. and never keeps anything from us. The werry last time the Captain dined there, they vos torkin' about 'im; but they're allus a-torkin' about 'im; they're allus a-sayin' vot a racketty buffer he'll be, if he ain't looked werry sharp arter. So vot's become of *his* hindeppence, with a spy upon all 'is hactions!"

"I don't at all like that," said Bob; "in my mind it ain't the ticket; and I'll just put him up to it. It's a delicate p'int; but I'll do it."

"He ought to be put up to it. It ain't by no manner o' means the thing. But don't you think he'd better a beer as he vos?"

"Why, you see, there's a p'int," replied Bob. "You see master love missis, which makes all the odds."

"Love!" rejoined Venerable Joe, sarcastically. "Love's a himposition. There's been more people imposed upon by that air vord than by all the perfessional swindlers in natur'. It's a gross, a uniwersal himposition; and it's on'y werry wonderful to me that it ain't long ago been hexpunged. A gall says she loves yer. Werry well; but are you consequentially obligated for to make a fool o' yourself? No: you've only got her hipsy-dixy, and vot's the good o' that? Marry her; and you'll werry soon see 'ow sweet's the love as meets return.' But arout that, look ear on'y jist for hinstance: a gal loves a soger, vich they all do; it's reg'lar: he's a private; still she loves 'im—oh! hout an' hout! Werry well; don't yer think she'd give 'im



up for a hoffer? In course she vood! And why? Why, cos it 'ud be a better chance. Has for love, it's the vickedest, the swindlinest himposition as is. The chances is vot gals looks out for. The on'y qvestion with them is, 'Is it a good chance?' If it is, they'll have it; if it ain't they von't, unless they can't get nothink better. It's the deadest take in. is that love, ever heered on: a deader do never vos hinwented. You take my advice, and don't be fozzled. Venever you 'ear the vord love, always wiew it as a gross himposition. Hif yer don't you'll be done, and on'y find out the difference ven it's too late. Look at me, jist for hinstance. I was sixty-two in Jannerwerry last: look at that! Sixty-two, and I ain't done yet. I'm inwited to all the parties. I'm never forgot. There's the old uns, as is single, a-hoglin' on me reg'lar; and the old uns, as is married, a-settin' their darters upon me; it 'ud be sich a chance! and all, in course, cos I'm single. Why, d' yer think they'd care about my company perwided I vos married? Does it stand at all to reason they'd inwite me as they do, hif they did'nt believe I vos yet to be done? Not a bit of it! not if I vos vorth a matter o' fifty times as much as I ham. But, as it is, as I've allus escaped the himposition—there am I, never missed, allus thought on, looked up to, and respected; vlich, let me tell you, is a werry great adwantage. By the bye, I'll introduce you; you must go to one of our conversayshoneys."

"What's that?" inquired Bob.

"Vot? a conversayshoney? A slap sort of supper, in course. They're a-going to have another at Sir Hamilton Hideaways, vich is gone abroad until things comes a leetle bit round. He's a mean un hisself, but his servants is trumps. None but single meo's admitted. Vill you go?"

Bob promised that he would; and at the same time announced that nothing could give him greater pleasure; but the arguments of the venerable gentleman, powerful and pointed though they were, failed to convince him that marriage was a thing to be despised. But that which made a far deeper impression upon his mind, than anything else which had transpired during the discussion of this generally interesting subject, was the fact of his having been informed that his master was subjected to a system of espionage, which was, in his private judgment, excessively wrong, and therefore he held it to be incumbent upon him, as a true and faithful servant, to acquaint his master with it the very first opportunity, in order that he might thenceforward be upon his guard. He felt it, of course, to be rather a nice point for him to mention; but conceiving it to be strictly a thing which ought to be known, he firmly

made up his mind to impart that knowledge ; and, with many expressions of high consideration, took leave of his venerable friend for the night.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

### STANLEY'S ELEVATION IN THE SOCIAL SCALE PROPOSED.

As Sir William's game was to have recourse to everything tending to promote Stanley's absence from Amelia, he now flew to billiards, at which he had been an adept for years, and by which he knew that Stanley could not fail to be attracted. Stanley knew nothing of the game ; but Sir William, in the most friendly manner, of course, undertook to teach him ; and the immediate result of that teaching was, that the pupil became fascinated. Night after night, he was at it till day-break. He thought of nothing, dreamt of nothing but laying out, cannoning, and pocketing the red ; he was never, indeed, happy without a queue in his hand. Whether Sir William were with him or not,—and he frequently was not ; for, embracing the opportunity which his absence afforded, he would call for him at home, with the view of conversing with Amelia—he was every evening to be found at the table. He had continually some match on hand, with the specious and highly accomplished persons whom he met—and few scoundrels are more accomplished than the higher order of billiard sharps—and who, by virtue of flattery and “tender” treatment, fleeced him of large sums of money. Still he would play. The more he lost, the more capable he felt himself of winning ; and with so much ingenuity and judgment was it managed, that he not only never entertained a moment's thought of being victimised, but proposed increased stakes every game, to which they invariably, but of course with great reluctance, consented.

When this had gone on for some time, Amelia felt very unhappy, and more especially, in consequence of having received an anonymous letter, which contained intimations prejudicial to Stanley's reputation as a fond and faithful husband, and of which she could not help thinking, although, at the time, she destroyed it with contempt. Still she never reproached. Evening after evening was he absent, while she, in tears, was tortured by the thousand apprehensions with which, under the circumstances, solitude teems ; but on his return, she invariably flew to him and blessed him, and welcomed him home with a smile of joy. No tear was ever visible then ; no word which could indicate doubt was ever breathed. If he offered

to apologise, she would stop him with a kiss, while her eyes beamed with confidence and love.

Weeks passed, and Bob had not had what *he* deemed a fair opportunity of imparting to Stanley the information he had obtained, touching the watch that had been set upon his actions. At length, however, an excellent one offered, and he embraced it. They were returning from a shooting-match at the time, and he certainly did think, as he sat in the cab, that his master, who had spoken to him familiarly several times on the road, was in the true state of mind to entertain a grateful sense of his kindness.

"I beg pardon, sir," said he, after calling up all the moral courage he had in him. "I beg pardon—I hope you won't think it a liberty; but I've got something, sir, on my sentiments, which I think it my duty to let you know on."

"Well Bob," said Stanley, "what is it?"

"Why, sir, it's—I know it's a delicate p'int, and one which, possible, I don't ought to name; but I think it a duty as I owe—"

"Out with it!" cried Stanley. "Let's have it at once."

"Well, sir; you see General Johnson—which is a genelman;—but I hope you won't name it again, 'cause I'm bound as a matter of honour."

"Well! and what of General Johnson?"

"Why, sir—it's only that you may be awares; I only do it to put you on your guard."

"Put me on my guard! What do you mean?"

"Why, sir, as I hear from the servants which told me, that General Johnson and the Captain is spies upon all you do."

Stanley looked at him fiercely, and in an instant, Bob saw that he had made a mistake.

"How dare you," cried Stanley, "name a subject of this kind to me?"

"I beg pardon, sir, I hope you won't—"

"Silence, sir! Never let me hear another syllable upon this or any other subject, in which you are not concerned, pass your lips."

Bob shrank instinctively into the most remote corner of the cab, and scarcely breathed; but of all the base and glaring acts of ingratitude he had ever heard, or read of in history, either ancient or modern, he held this to be, beyond all dispute, the most glaring and the most base.

"What!" thought he, privately, and in the strictest possible confidence—for he felt that any public expression of his sentiments would be, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, inexpedient—"what! Is it a dream, or is it a honey-fide

wide-awake fact that a master can be found on the face of the blessed earth to behave so regular ongrateful? Warn't it all for his own good? Was it anything to me? Did'n't I name it for his own blessed self? And does he think, does he hope, does he expect that I'll ever, while I've breath in my body, tell him anything again? Not if I know it; *not* if I was to live on and on in his service until I was as old as Jerusalem!"

He was amazed! It was so monstrous! Nothing in the similitude of indignation could exceed his in strength; but he kept it down tightly. He scorned to give it vent; for, whenever he looked at the monster of ingratitude out of the off corner of his eye, he perceived that his aspect was strikingly ferocious.

On reaching home, Stanley,—whom Bob's information, for more than one reason, had angered,—was met by Amelia, who with dancing eyes, joyfully explained to him, that during his absence, the Captain had sent him as a present, the most elegant billiard-table she had ever beheld.

"A billiard-table!" cried Stanley, with a scowl. "How did *he* know that I ever play at billiards?"

"My dearest love!" said Amelia, "I really do not know; but I suppose papa fancied you were fond of the game, as many gentlemen are!"

"He *knew* that I was fond of the game," cried Stanley.

"Then was it not, my love, the more kind of him to send it?"

"Amelia, I have no wish to quarrel with your father; but I would have both him and the General understand, that I hold in abhorrence the character of a spy!"

"My Stanley," cried Amelia, who violently trembled.

"What is it you mean?"

"That table shall go back! I'll not have it."

"Oh! do not return it, pray—pray do not return it! You will not? My dearest,—my Stanley. You will let me have *some* influence over you? I know you will. Consider how terrible it will be if this present be not accepted. Consider it was an act of pure kindness, and ought not to be spurned. Come, you will not—for my sake you will not return it!"

"I will not submit to be treated like a child. I will not in silence be subjected to the pitiful system of which your father and his friend seem to be so much enamoured."

"My love, you have been misinformed on some point, I am sure of it. I know my dear father to be incapable—ay, my Stanley—incapable of any act of meanness or dishonour. But come, my love, be calm. Be sure that you have been misinformed. Be sure of it, my Stanley. I am as conscious of his

integrity as I am, my dear, of yours ; and I feel that I could answer for either with my life. ' But you will not, you will not even think of returning the table ?'

Stanley was silent. He suffered himself to be caressed and reasoned with calmly, and the result was, that the table remained ; but he was still highly indignant with the Captain, and could scarcely be prevailed upon to refrain from sending him what *he* deemed a proper, but which would have been in reality, a most insulting letter.

Sir William watched the progress of these events—the whole of which became known to him as they occurred—with delight ; but the nearer his infamous design upon the honour of Amelia approached, in his view, perfection, the more strongly did he feel that his advances must be not only gradual, but imperceptible, to succeed. He still had frequent opportunities of conversing with her alone—for Stanley's matches with the sharps still went on, and he was constantly absent ; but his studied distance increased with each visit, his respect for her apparently became more and more profound.

At length he decided upon taking another specious step, which, while it directly tended to ensure Amelia's applause, would have the effect, in a pecuniary sense, of materially accelerating Stanley's ruin.

He, of course, knew the character of Stanley well ; for the promotion of his own purposes he had studied it deeply. He, therefore, knew that any proposition calculated to enable him to gain caste in society, would be seized with avidity, and carried out, as far as it could be carried out by him, with gladness. His plans were accordingly laid ; and when perfected, he opened his views to Amelia, as far, at least, as he desired them to appear.

"I wish," said he, that Stanley," of whose absence from home they had now been speaking, "had something more to occupy his mind ; some study, some honourable pursuit. I am sure that he would feel much more settled than he does. Do you not think that if he had some object in view besides the mere pleasure of the day, it would be better ? For instance, suppose he were in Parliament ? For my own part, I should like much to see him in the House."

"Is that practicable ?" inquired Amelia.

"Most certainly ; and not only practicable, but easily to be accomplished."

"Dear me, I should like it above all things. Have you ever named the subject to him ?"

"Never. I scarcely knew whether it would be agreeable to you."

"Oh! I should be delighted!"

"Then, of course, I will name it."

"Pray do, and urge it strongly: but I am sure that he will be overjoyed. I feel convinced that the idea is one which he never entertained."

"Well then, let me see, to-morrow."

"Oh, to-morrow you will dine with us at his mamma's."

"Of course. I'll bring the subject forward then. It will be an excellent opportunity. His mother, I should say, will have but little objection?"

"Oh! she will be in raptures? I am sure of it. Pray do not forget it."

"I will not. Nor will I forget to ascertain in the mean time what places are likely to be open. There are two new writs about to be moved for, I know; but I'll inquire farther into the matter, and come to-morrow, prepared with every necessary information."

Amelia thanked him again and again. She indeed felt grateful to him for the interest which he apparently took in Stanley's welfare, and not only during the day, but throughout the night, dwelt with ecstasy upon the prospect which opened to her view. She was sure that her Stanley would distinguish himself in Parliament; she was certain that his speeches would be brilliant in the extreme! And then the delight she should experience in reading those speeches interspersed with "cheers," "loud cheers," "enthusiastic cheering!"—and then, "the honourable member resumed his seat amidst thunders of applause!" Oh! it would be so delightful! She shed tears of rapture. Her woman's heart swelled with joy and pride. And then, after a time, he would be in the cabinet—a Right Honourable!—the Right Honourable Gentleman—the Right Honourable Member—the Right Honourable Stanley Thorn! And then the Prime Minister!—the Premier of England!—the right hand of royalty!—loaded with honours, dining daily at the palace! Could anything surpass it? And if talent could win them, these honours would be won; for who possessed the talent of her Stanley? It was a noble prospect!—a glorious prospect!—a prospect on which she delighted to dwell. But on the following day, when the subject was renewed, her views were altogether eclipsed by the widow, who saw with unparalleled distinctness, that Stanley would in less than six months be created a Peer.

"And what," inquired Stanley, when the subject had been explained, "do you suppose would be about the expense of my election?"

"The expenses," replied Sir William, "are in all cases go-

verned in the first place by the nature of the opposition, and in the next by the character of the electors. Some constituencies are comparatively pure, while others are grossly corrupt, and require an immense deal of management, treating, and so on."

"Oh! treat them by all means!" cried the widow. "Do not think about the cost. Let them have anything they like. Let them eat and drink, and shout! I think I hear them! And then, when Stanley is chaired through the town, followed by the crowd of devoted electors, and bowing to all around, while from every window hats and handkerchiefs are waving, and in every street bands of music are playing, and the cannon roaring, and the people shouting, and—Oh! will it not be a joyous scene! And then, my love," she added, addressing Amelia, "we'll have the chair covered with ribbons; and favours in the hats and the bosoms of the people, and banners, and streamers, and triumphal arches, and wreaths extending from house to house; and then we'll have twelve virgins dressed all in white, strewing flowers in the road; and then the balls, and then—"

"That is," said Stanley, "in the event of my gaining the election."

"Exactly, my love; but these things must be previously settled and prepared. It will never do at all to drive them off till the last. Besides, I feel as certain as I am of my own existence that you have but to start to succeed. Amelia and I will go and canvass ourselves, which *will* be so glorious! 'For whom do you vote, my good man?' Some may reply, 'Mr. Smith,' or whatever the name of the opposition candidate may be. 'Oh! dear me, no,' we shall say; 'you must vote for Mr. Thorn; he's such a dear!—such an extremely nice person! And then we'll make the children a present, and kiss them, and—oh! we'll manage it, my love. But you must give us our instructions.'"

"Yes, yes, mother, yes," said Stanley, checking the enthusiastic widow; "you shall have every instruction, everything shall be as you wish; but there are certain preliminary matters which had better be settled first."

He and Sir William then entered into those matters seriously; but as they were immensely too dull for the widow, she and Amelia retired, with the view of making such arrangements as were in their judgment eminently calculated to give eclat to Stanley's return.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

IN WHICH STANLEY PREPARES TO BECOME THE SUCCESSOR OF A PECULIARLY HONOURABLE M.P.

THE project of getting Stanley into Parliament, involving, as it did, such high considerations, and opening a prospect so brilliant, was of course soon communicated by Amelia to the Captain and the General, both of whom at once resolved to call into action all their energies, with the view of ensuring success. They naturally regarded it as a thing well calculated to fix the principles and to enlarge the views of him whom they held in high esteem, and for whom they were ardently anxious to do all in their power. They saw and conversed with him frequently on the subject, and were delighted with the talent he displayed; for while he explained his political predilections with great clearness and point, his mode of expression was peculiarly forcible and suasive.

Still he preserved a certain coldness, a distance, which neither the Captain nor the General could understand. They applied to Amelia; but all the information they could obtain from her was that he had been on some point misinformed. She at the same time begged of them earnestly to take no further notice of the matter, assuring them that the impression would soon wear off, and be thought of no more.

Conscious, however, of the integrity of his motives, the Captain could not allow a false impression to exist: and therefore resolved to have the point cleared up.

"My good fellow," said he, addressing Stanley in the presence of the General, "I may be mistaken; but there does not appear to be that warmth of feeling, that unqualified friendship existing between us which I am anxious to cultivate. If I am mistaken I shall be happy; if not, state at once and unreservedly what it is, that the thing may be explained."

"Captain," said Stanley, "as you wish me to state what it is without reserve, I will do so. I have understood that you and the General have assumed to yourselves the office of spies upon——"

"Spies!" exclaimed the General; "employ some other term."

"I know of no other term so applicable."

"Sir, I will not allow any man breathing to apply a term so opprobrious to me."

"I am glad," rejoined Stanley with the most perfect coolness, "that you consider it opprobrious, although it simply



proves that men can bear to *do* that of which they cannot bear to be told."

"I beg that you will instantly explain," said the General. "I do not understand this language: it is not the tone to which I have been accustomed."

"It may not be, and yet I know of no other tone which, under the circumstances, ought to be assumed. Do you look upon me as a child?"

"I look upon you, sir, as a hot-brained, impetuous, insulting young dog, who one of these days will be called out and shot through the head. Why, my father had his eye upon me until I was fifty! He—"

Here the General suddenly paused: he recollected that Stanley had no father, and on the instant extended his hand, and assured him that he had spoken without a thought, and that he would not wantonly wound his feelings, for the world. He conceived that he had touched that chord which commonly vibrates with a pang through the heart, and therefore felt it acutely, being perfectly unconscious of the fact that the feelings of Stanley had not been touched at all.

"My dear fellow," said the Captain, as Stanley looked as frowningly as if the General's conjecture had been correct, "you must not misinterpret our motives. We are anxious for your welfare: you will readily believe that. On my part that anxiety may appear to be not only natural, but interested, seeing that the happiness of my child is involved; but on the part of the General it springs from a feeling of friendship, the disinterested purity of which cannot be impugned. You must not suppose that because we manifest that anxiety, we come under the harsh denomination of spies."

"That is all very well," replied Stanley; but I hate to have my actions watched: not, I would have you understand, that I am ashamed of those actions, but because it not only displays a want of confidence, but places me at once in the position of a fool. That which I detest is its going forth to the world that I require to be sharply looked after, as if I were, forsooth! an idiot or a child. It is the publication of that to the world of which I more especially complain."

"But we have never published this to the world."

"It has been published. It is the common talk even of the servants."

"The servants!" said the Captain with a smile. "I'll not for a moment suppose that you attach the least importance, or even pay the slightest attention, to the common talk of servants. But come, come, don't let us pursue this subject; I beg of you to believe that our object is not to annoy you by any

unnecessary display of anxiety, but, on the contrary, to cultivate a friendly, an affectionate feeling, and to promote your happiness by all the means at our command."

The proposal to drop the subject at the time met Stanley's views, for he had certainly no desire to have it known that he had derived his information from Bob. Not another word was therefore said about the matter : the Captain at once turned to the task he had proposed, that of convincing Stanley of the expediency of adopting those political principles to which he and the General adhered. But Stanley experienced great difficulty in making up his mind. His bias was decidedly in favour of those principles ; but Sir William, by whom he was disposed to be guided, was on the opposite side. Circumstances, however, by which political decisions are invariably governed, led him to decide at once against his own bias, and therefore in favour of Sir William's views.

Mr. Trueman, a friend of Sir William, wishing to retire from public life altogether, was about to apply for the very last office which M.P.'s in general are disposed to accept, and the very first which ministers, if they have any patriotic feeling or generosity in them, are anxious to confer upon a political opponent. This office, which is one of those sinecures that have not even yet been abolished, is called the Chiltern Hundreds. It is not in itself very lucrative, but it has been nevertheless the foundation of many fortunes : many have in consequence been raised to the baronetage of England, and many moreover to the peerage. Promotion, however, it must as a matter of common justice be stated, was not the object of Mr. Trueman. He was a gentleman whose party had treated him with the most glaring ingratitude ; indeed so extremely base had been their conduct, that all virtuous persons will admit that it ought to be held up to universal execration.

For two-and-twenty years he had been a member of the Imperial Parliament. He had never been known to take an active part in any debate, or to be absent from any important division ; nor during the whole of his brilliant career did he ever give the slightest offence to his constituents,—there being the most perfect unanimity of principle and feeling amongst them,—an extraordinary fact, which was probably attributable, in some slight degree, to the circumstance of the constituency of the highly-gifted borough he had had for six consecutive parliaments the honour to represent, consisted of a peculiarly thickset hedge, and two barns of remarkable antiquity. But even when his constituents became more numerous, by virtue of a memorable Act, he might have defied them to charge him with any desertion of principle, consistency being a thing upon

which he prided himself especially, and which was indeed quite incapable of being assailed. He invariably voted with his party. If even any remarkably rich vein of reasoning happened to seduce him into the belief that his political friends must be wrong, he would stick to them still with the most admirable tenacity, repudiating all faith in the soundness of his own judgment, rather than consent on any point to desert them. He was indeed in this respect immutable: he felt, and very naturally, that he had but one course to pursue, that of following his leader through thick and thin; and from that neither arguments, fears, nor entreaties, could ever induce him to swerve. At the period of his marriage he was wedded to his political principles, and his faithful adherence to them was probably attributable more to a fond regard for the memory of her from whom he had imbibed them, than to any very powerful conviction of their purity and practical virtue. The fruit of this marriage was a son; but his principles yielded no fruit: they were at all events barren to him. They might, had he trimmed but a trifle, have been productive; but he was far too firm a supporter of his party to render it necessary for the slightest attention to be paid to his claims. His estate was barely sufficient for his support in the style to which he had ever been accustomed, and he therefore had a highly correct paternal anxiety about a handsome provision for his son; but there were always at that interesting period of British history so many patriots whose adherence had in some way or other to be secured, that there was never a particle of patronage left for those upon whom the most perfect reliance could be placed. His son had been waiting for years for an appointment; but it regularly enough happened that whenever a vacancy occurred which would have suited him in every particular to a hair, it was filled up at once by some other young gentleman having a prior claim, of course, while he remained at home living in idleness and hope, "promise-crammed," indeed, but with as sombre a prospect of an appointment as it is, perhaps, possible for the human imagination to conceive.

This was the ingratitude of which Mr. Trueman complained; and it certainly was very flagrant and very base; it was this which eventually tired him out; and as he indignantly communicated to Sir William his firm determination to throw up his seat in disgust, it was arranged between them that the fact should not be publicly known until Stanley was ready to start.

"Well, now really," exclaimed the widow, when Sir William, who dined with her now almost daily, had at table explained the whole affair, "how very admirable! Why, we

have the game in our own hands! Not a creature will know a word about it till our arrangements are complete! What could have been more fortunate or more delightful!"

"There is one slight difficulty to surmount," observed Sir William, "which is, that in order to secure your return, you must be on the popular side."

"Will that be essential to success?" inquired Stanley, "seeing that we have the start?"

"Why, it may not be positively essential, it is true; but by taking that side you will be much more safe."

"Oh, be on the safe side, my dear!" cried the widow, inspired with a patriotic spirit. "Whatever you do, my love, be on the safe side."

"But," said Amelia, "will he not thereby violate his principles?"

"Dear me, of what possible importance is that! I have heard it asserted again and again, that in politics persons never dream of allowing principle to stand in the way of interest! It is really quite ridiculous to think of such a thing. It is not to be expected. I am sure I have heard that nobody does it, or at least that they who do are perfect idiots, and Stanley is not an idiot, my love: no, thank Heaven, he is not an idiot."

This, of course, was unanswerable: it settled the point at once, and Amelia, whom it effectually silenced, listened most attentively to the reasoning by which Sir William sought to prove the expediency of adopting the course he had suggested.

"Besides, my dear," interposed the widow, when Stanley was on the point of yielding, "what is the great object proposed? Is it not to obtain a seat in Parliament? Of course. Ought you not then to adopt those principles by which alone that object is certain to be secured? Why beyond all dispute. The safe side, my love, is the side for me. None can rationally hope to succeed who are not on the safe side."

"Well," said Stanley, when an infinite variety of equally sound and substantial arguments had induced him to determine in favour of that which was deemed the safe side; "and how about the qualification?"

"Oh that," replied Sir William, "can be easily managed."

"But—three hundred a-year landed property, is it not?—I possess no landed property."

"Well, but you can, you know, my love," said the widow.

"There will be no real difficulty at all about that."

"That will be quite unnecessary," said Sir William; "you can possess it as others do, nominally."

"Oh!" exclaimed the widow; "but I should like him to be in the actual possession of it."

"Well, that certainly would be more correct and straightforward."

"Of course," cried Stanley, who wished that three thousand a-year had been required, "and then they *can* raise no objection."

"It is always better," said Sir William, "when it can be conveniently managed"

"Oh," cried the widow, "it can be done without the slightest inconvenience in the world!"

"Very well. Then when will you start?"

"At once," replied Stanley. "The sooner the better. We'll settle the whole of the preliminaries, arrange everything likely to give us an advantage, and then the thing can be publicly announced"

This was agreed to, and the remainder of the evening was passed, on the one hand, by Stanley and Sir William, in marking out the details of the course to be pursued; and on the other, by Amelia and the widow in perfecting the plans they had previously conceived, and which were now about to be carried into actual execution.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE CANVASS.

ALL were now on the *qui vive*. Stanley was cramming for his political debut; Sir William was in constant communication with Mr. Trueman and the agents; the Captain and the General were making all the interest in their power, while Amelia and the widow were deriving from all quarters all sorts of information touching the task they themselves had undertaken to perform.

Their first object was to purchase an estate for Stanley near the borough in question; but as that was at the time impracticable, they engaged a furnished mansion for six months in the immediate vicinity, and lived in magnificent style. The ladies were indefatigable. There was scarcely a tradesman in the place to whom they failed to extend their patronage, while to almost every charitable institution in the county they sent munificent donations in the name of Stanley, until "Stanley Thorn" was in the mouth of every man, woman, and child. The name became extremely popular: every one was inquiring about Stanley Thorn, and poetically descanting upon his manifest wealth and unbounded benevolence; for, of course,

they had no conception of his object, that having been kept wisely a most profound secret.

At length the time for open action arrived: the writ was moved for, and the canvass commenced; and on the following day an opponent was in the field canvassing with corresponding energy.

Both candidates were unknown to the constituency, and hence their characters as portrayed by their respective supporters were, of course, extremely striking. Two more distinctly astonishing men never breathed. Their talents were of the highest order possible, while their hearts were so good, their principles so sound, their motives so particularly disinterested, their aspirations so excessively pure, that it seemed to be almost a pity to place them in a position to be contaminated by the ordinary people of this sublunary sphere. But, on the other hand, there never were, in the view of their respective opponents, two such hideous monsters crawling upon the face of the great globe. They were by far the most atrocious, the most corrupt, the most venal, the most unprincipled persons in nature; they were political villains, liars, swindlers, assassins; there never were such wretches; there never were such brutes! in short, as everything was left to the imagination, which revelled delightfully, and with the most perfect freedom, it soon became utterly impossible for the mind of man to conceive the legitimate extent of their political delinquencies: albeit, they had both about as much real knowledge of politics as might have been attributed to the children in the wood.

The character of a candidate, however, was a thing to which the majority of the electors attached no importance. The constituency of this enlightened borough was divided into two distinct classes: the dependent electors, who were compelled to vote to order, and those who were so really independent that they felt themselves at liberty to vote for him who promised the most, and paid the best. In both cases principle was merged in interest; which is certainly one of the most beautiful characteristics of the popular mode of exercising electoral privileges, seeing that it renders it perfectly unnecessary for electors in the aggregate to trouble their heads about politics at all. Nor is it merely unnecessary; it is even worse than useless, inasmuch as they who do think for themselves,—which is a great deal of trouble, and people really ought to appreciate more highly than they do the unequivocal politeness of those who are at all times willing to relieve them of that trouble,—cannot act upon their own judgment, which renders its formation mere labour in vain, and hence in all such cases it is manifest that the people ought to look at the thing as a matter

with which they have no more to do than to be guided by those who have infinitely more time than they have or can have to view the conflicting ramifications of State policy, the study of which forms the chief business of their perfectly patriotic lives.

Here, however, the independent electors were in the ascendant: they formed by far the stronger body, and constituted, therefore, the more interesting class: and, oh, how sweet are the feelings of an independent man! how clear are his views, how noble his aspirations! who will dare to coerce *him*? He is a man; he strongly feels that he is a man, a really free man, a Briton! He takes his vote to the best market. He is not basely bound to give it to this man or to that. No! it is his own property; he feels it to be so; he knows it, and he makes the most of it. And who shall impugn his right? Who shall attack the rights of property? They must be held inviolable. As the sacred character of property forms the very basis of civilization, down tumbles civilization pell mell if this, its legitimate base, be removed. Perish the principles which tend to subvert the rights of property! They are the most pernicious that can spread. If once they are permitted to stalk through the land unmuzzled, away will go our social system, mingled—in the vilest and most sanguinary manner mingled,—with chaotic heaps of revolutionary dust. But for the inviolable character of property, England, the land of the free, the envy of surrounding empires, the wonder of the world,—for the integrity of whose glorious institutions so many thousands of aspiring and noble hearts have bled, and so many thousands more are ready to bleed, would be one of the most rascally nations upon earth. The security of property is the palladium of our liberties. It is the great, the glorious thing!—the very thing!—the thing to which more real importance should be attached than to any other thing under heaven; for, unless it be universally recognized and upheld, the British empire must crumble like touchwood into dust. And who that perceives how essential to the due preservation of our rights and privileges as Britons it is that property should be held inviolable,—who that perceives that if it be *not*, ruin, grim ruin, will stride through the land, kicking everything down right and left in its progress,—can fail to perceive that to impugn the right of men who possess that property which is involved in the franchise,—more especially as in thousands upon thousands of instances a vote is the only property a man does possess,—is directly to assail the sacred character of that which forms the real foundation of England's glory? Of course, many superficial persons will contend that a vote is a

species of property which ought not to be sold; but in the view of these really independent electors, how absurdly untenable did this position appear! how ridiculously rotten! They argued thus:—A vote either is property, or it is not. That is perfectly clear; and equally clear is it that according to the Constitution, a man either is master of that property, or he is not. If then a vote is property, and a man be the master of that property, it legitimately follows that he is at liberty to sell it if he likes; if on the other hand, it be not property *bonâ fide*, but merely property in trust, of what intrinsic value is a vote to its possessor? But is it not monstrous to talk about its being a property in trust in a great commercial country like this! Is it not given to a man expressly in order that he may do what he likes with it? Very well then: when he sells it, he does do what he likes with it; and thereby performs his part of the contract. The whole thing resolved itself to this; and, although it is not even yet universally admitted or understood, it was understood and highly appreciated by the independent electors of the borough in question. They held votes to be their own personal property; and in order that they might sell it to the best possible advantage, they formed themselves into independent associations, and, working in a body, held back till the last, which was a highly correct and most excellent plan, because parties were then so equally divided, that towards the close of the poll, the value of votes increased immensely; indeed, it then became a question with each candidate how much it would be worth his while to give for the purpose of securing his return, which could then be secured beyond all doubt by purchasing the personal property of this enlightened lot.

Under these refreshing circumstances it at once became manifest that the independent part of the constituency need not be canvassed at all; that they might safely be left to the management of an agent by whom they were all known, to be treated with in the event of their patriotic services being absolutely essential to Stanley's success.

The canvass, therefore, embraced the dependent electors chiefly, and it was amazing how unanimous they were in favour of Stanley, according to the ingenious gentlemen whom his committee employed. Oh, there could be no doubt at all about his return. That was placed beyond the pale of dispute. They never before met with so much enthusiasm. Their success was beyond all conception. The anxiety of the electors to record their votes in his favour, was, indeed, truly marvellous!

Amelia and the widow took the principal tradesmen. They were canvassing daily, from ten till four, and by virtue of ex-



travagant purchases and promises of future patronage—which could not by any means come under the denomination of bribery,—they were very successful.

Having gone satisfactorily through this list, they took up one which was deemed the most hopeless : it was that of the mechanics who were known to be coerced by the opposition, and whose support could not, therefore, be reasonably expected. Success, however, had made the widow bold. She felt sure of surmounting every obstacle then : she would not hear of the possibility, in any case, of failure, but contended, that if even she and Amelia could not induce them to vote for Stanley, they could, at all events, prevail upon them not to vote at all.

The morning they started on this expedition, they repudiated the carriage : not with the view of assuming an air of humility ; on the contrary, they were dressed with unusual elegance, and had their purses unusually well filled, having a high appreciation of that beautiful maxim : *Amour fait beaucoup, mais argent fait tout.*

The first place at which they called was a cottage, in the occupation of a mechanic named Sims, and as they approached, three children, who were sitting upon the threshold,—the eldest of whom was performing the character of governess to her brother and sister, who represented scholars,—started up with the most perfect expression of surprise within the memory of the oldest inhabitant.

“Is your father at home, my little dears?” inquired the widow.

“Mother ! mother ! mother !” exclaimed the children in a breath, their eyes and mouths being still very widely extended, and their mother, who had been preparing her husband’s meal, was in an instant at the door.

“Mr. Sims,” said the widow, with a fascinating smile, “is he within?”

“N—no, ma’am,” replied the poor woman, curtsying very respectfully, and feeling very nervous. “He’s at work, ma’am ; but he’ll be home to his dinner, ma’am, in about ten minutes.”

“We’ll wait till he returns, if you’ll allow us.”

Mrs. Sims again curtsied, placed two wooden chairs in an eligible position, and tremblingly dusted them with her apron, while the children, with the utmost caution, glided into a corner, where they stood in a group with their fingers in their mouths, glancing timidly at the ladies.

“Those are *your* sweet children, I presume,” observed the widow. “Come here, my little dears : come ! do not be afraid !”

The children looked as if they really could not help it : they

did, however, eventually approach, and the widow fondled them all with great affection.

"Why," said the widow, "you must be very happy in this sweet little place, and with so fine a little family?"

"Yes, ma'am, thank Heaven, we're pretty comfortable, considering the place is rather too large for our things, ma'am, but that we can't help. My husband's obliged to live here for a vote."

"Then you anticipate the object of our visit?" said the widow. "You are aware that it is to solicit that vote? Do you know on which side Mr. Sims means to go?"

"I don't exactly know, ma'am, but I think he is to vote for Mr. Swansdown."

"Oh! but Mr. Thorn is the popular candidate!"

"Is he, ma'am?"

"Oh, dear me! yes: he's so charming a person, so elegant, so talented, and means to do so much good, you can't think! You'll be delighted to see him. He is so excessively clever. Mr. Sims really must vote for him."

"I'm afraid he must go on the other side, ma'am."

"Good gracious! You astonish me! Why?"

"Because the gentleman he works for will be on that side."

"That cannot possibly be of the least importance: it cannot possibly follow, that, because the employer of Mr. Sims will vote for Mr. Swansdown, Mr. Sims should therefore vote for Mr. Swansdown too?"

"I don't understand much about it, ma'am, of course, but he has always been obliged to do so."

"Oh! but you know that's excessively wrong: it is very wrong indeed for employers thus to influence the employed; because, you see, it destroys all freedom of election! which is dreadful, you know: besides the practice is expressly forbidden by law. I must talk to him on this great point, and you must talk to him too: we must show him that he is not a free agent if he permits himself thus to be coerced and led away."

"Here he is, ma'am," observed Mrs. Sims, as her husband, with a thoughtful aspect, entered.

The widow turned and bowed to him, as Sims removed his cap and informed her that he was her servant.

"Mr. Sims," said the widow, "we have called to solicit your vote for Mr. Thorn."

"I am sorry," replied Sims, respectfully. "I would give it with pleasure, but I must vote on the other side."

"Indeed! Well, you are a good creature to be sorry: it proves that at heart you are in favour of Mr. Thorn."

"I don't know the gentleman, but I agree with his principles."

"How is this, then, that you must not vote for him, Mr. Sims?"

"Because, to speak plain, ma'am, my interest won't let me."

"Dear me, how very odd! But is it correct, Mr. Sims, either morally or politically, to sacrifice principle to interest?"

"Why, it mayn't be, ma'am, certainly it mayn't; but I've got a young family, ma'am, and in justice to them I mayn't act upon any fine notions."

"But you will thereby benefit your family. We will make it worth your while, Mr. Sims."

Sims shook his head doubtfully.

"You do not question our sincerity, Mr. Sims?"

"Not the least, but what's to recompense me for being thrown out of work, which I should be, as sure as you're there ma'am, directly."

"That would be very sad; it certainly would, very, very sad indeed; but then you see, Mr. Sims, we ought always to act upon our principles."

"Perhaps we ought, ma'am; but we mayn't always do it."

"Oh, but virtue, you know, always meets its reward!"

"And in cases like mine, that reward is starvation."

"Not so, Mr. Sims. We would not only immediately remunerate you for your services, but in the event of your being in consequence dismissed, I am sure that Mr. Thorn, who is one of the best and kindest persons breathing, would feel himself in honour bound to do something for you."

"The promises of gentlemen is one thing, ma'am, and the keeping of them promises is another. About four years ago I depended on promises, and voted on your side, and what was the consequence? Why, I was out of work the whole of the winter, and a bitter winter it was. I didn't earn a shilling till they wanted my vote again, and then they took me on."

"But could you not have procured employment elsewhere?"

"I might, perhaps, if I'd left the town; but I was born here, and so was my father before me: I couldn't bear the thought of leaving."

"Of course not; the feeling is very natural; but I must say that it is an extremely shocking thing that your vote, which is to all intents and purposes your own, should not be exercised freely. Don't you see, Mr. Sims?"

"I do, ma'am: I do see, and have felt it to my cost. I wish that I had no vote at all."

"Why then do you register?"

"I am compelled to register by the same power as that which compels me to vote. By giving votes to poor men like me, you only give those votes to their masters: you only increase their

political influence : you only give them additional power over the men they employ."

"Well, Mr. Sims, I of course regret exceedingly that you are thus situated, but I hope, still, that you will think better of it. Besides, you have not yet heard my proposal."

"Whatever you propose, ma'am, on this score, will be a proposal to ruin my family, which I can't of course agree to. I say this with respect, ma'am ; I mean no offence. I don't believe that you'd do it if you knew it, but ruin would come for all that."

"Pray urge him no farther," whispered Amelia, earnestly. "It will be dreadful if we persuade him to injure himself and family for us !"

"Oh, but my dear, that is not the way to canvass ! We must not consider these things now ! If we do we shall never get on !"

While these memorable observations were being delivered in a whisper, Sims correctly retired to the extreme corner of the room, which the widow no sooner perceived than she drew his wife aside, and said, "My dear Mrs. Sims, I am sure that so amiable a person as you appear to be, must have very considerable influence. Try what you can do to persuade your good husband to give us his vote. I will place in your hands twenty pounds if you can induce him to promise, as I have the utmost confidence in you ; and be assured, that if, after the election, anything unpleasant should occur, you shall not be forgotten."

Twenty pounds ! Fascination floated upon the very sound of such a sum. What might it not procure ! It might even enable them to commence in a small way of business, and thus to be comparatively independent. Twenty pounds ! The sum seemed so very immense that the poor woman drew towards her husband at once with rapture in her eyes and temptation on her tongue.

The widow now felt quite sure of success, and while the daughter of Eve, whom she had charmed, was endeavouring to prove the inexpediency of refusing the immense amount of money that had been offered, and placed the strongest possible emphasis upon the fact that it might be received without the slightest violation of either principle or honour, the fair canvassers were engaged in caressing the children ; and when they had adorned with satin sashes the waists of the two girls, who strutted about the room with the most exalted pride, and turning constantly as they strutted to admire the long ends which reached the ground, the widow placed a sovereign in the hands of the boy, who looked alternately at her and the wealth she had bestowed, with an expression of the most intense amazement.

The conference between Sims and his wife, both of whom, while enforcing their respective views, were extremely energetic, was soon at an end, and the result was that Sims refused to yield.

"I am sorry," said he, "I am very sorry, ladies, that I am compelled to vote against my inclination ; but I know what the consequence will be so well, that I dare not do it. I hope Mr. Thorn will succeed ; I hope he will, ladies, sincerely ; but as far as I, myself, am concerned, it is of no use—I *must* vote against him."

This was conclusive. The firmness with which this decision was pronounced, convinced the widow that nothing could shake his resolution, and, therefore, after many expressions of regret on both sides, she prepared to take leave. Amelia, however, before she quitted the place, drew the poor woman aside, and generously presented her with five sovereigns, which she accepted and acknowledged with tears of gratitude.

"God-bless you, lady !" she exclaimed. "I will teach my children to pray for you. May He protect you for ever ?"

This was a very poor beginning. It tended to daunt the enthusiasm of both. Amelia began to consider whether any possible circumstances could justify the practice of tempting poor persons to entail wretchedness and ruin upon themselves, and soon arrived at the conclusion that no justification could be found. This conclusion she immediately communicated to the widow, who contested it warmly, on the ground of its adoption being utterly inexpedient ; but Amelia urged it so zealously, and with so much force and feeling, that she eventually so far prevailed as to induce a suspension of operations until the point had been deliberately settled at home.

As they passed through the town on their return, they met Bob and his venerable friend, by whom they were informed that the Captain, accompanied by General and Miss Johnson, had arrived, which delighted them both, and they hastened to join them.

Bob had been extremely useful. He had ferreted out the deep designs of the independent electors, and had felt their pulse with really admirable tact. He knew the whole of their movements, attended all their meetings, and reported progress with great discrimination ; and while he felt that his services were highly appreciated, he had not the slightest doubt they would be handsomely rewarded.

The hope of reward, however,—although truth induces the confession, that that was very lively and strong,—was not the spur to which his zeal and activity were principally attributable. He gloried in the task. He felt flattered by the confidence

reposed in him, and though in the garb of a mechanic, his heart swelled with pride, for he knew that, as much depended upon the judgment he displayed, his position was one of high importance.

But although he had been in great spirits, although he had succeeded to his heart's content, in the performance of the task he had undertaken, he had no one to converse with confidentially, no one to accompany him, no one to whom he could open his whole soul. He had a thousand times wished for his venerable friend, and hence, when he arrived, not only was he overjoyed to see him, but he instantly made a representation at head-quarters, which secured him as an auxiliary, and was conducting him, when he met his mistress, to a celebrated slop-shop in the town, to purchase a jacket and an apron for the venerable gentleman, that he might accompany him also incog.

"They look rayther spicey down here, I say, don't they?" said Bob, when Amelia and the widow had passed on.

"Werry slap," replied the venerable gentleman. "Vot are they been arter?"

"Oh! canvassing."

"Canwassing! vot! they canwass! Vell, vimmin is devils!"

"It only shows you wot they'll do for their husbands."

"That's reg'lar: so it does; they'll do a deal for 'em, ven they're a tidyish sort; ony, yer see, they make 'em pay werry dear for their dewotion."

"But wot I look at most, is, they don't stick at nothing; they'll go through fire and water to serve you."

"So they vill, ven you get 'em to bite; but even then, you know, there's allus two sides to a penny: look at both and you're safe to find one of 'em a voman. That's the pint: cos a voman is a voman all over the world. Still I agrees vith you reg'lar, that ven they do take, they sticks like lobsters to business; but that ain't the p'int: many on em looks arter number vun, vich leads them as is tied to 'em werry rum lives. They're safe to sarve you out, you know, in some way or nother."

"Ah, but I like to see a woman, you know, as'll go through anything for her husband."

"So do I! It's a interesting sight, and that's vere they gets over you! But if you look at the thing fillyosophocle, you'll find that their charges for this is werry heavy."

They now reached the slop-shop, and when the proprietor had suited the venerable gentleman to a hair, Bob took him to the head quarters of the independents, where they had a pint

of ale and ascertained that there was to be a grand meeting that evening at seven.

"Vot sort of buffers is them hindepondents?" inquired Venerable Joe.

"They're swells," replied Bob, "which votes for them as pays the best."

"Werry reg'lar," said the venerable gentleman, ironically.

"Then in course they hare warment."

"You'll say so, when you see 'em."

"I says so now? No woter as sell his wote ought to have a wote to sell. They ought all to be expunged, cos it's wenal corruption."

"But s'pose it's reg'lar?"

"So much the vusser. It don't ought to be! Vot is votes for? That's the p'int. Ain't they for to be guv to the best man? And how can that be, if they are sold like red herrings?"

"But in a place like this here, where it's done, you know, so reg'lar and deliberate, it makes all the odds!"

"Not a ha'perth. It only shows yer that rotten wenality is ketching. D'yer think now, if I was a genelman, I'd buy up the wotes of the wagabones?"

"If you didn't, the t'other buffer would, mind yer, that's where you'd feel it. S'pose you was a genelman which wanted to get into parliament. Very well. Here's a mob of swells here, which can do the trick for you, and if you don't buy 'em up you don't get in at all. Now, then, wouldn't you do it, providin' it wos reg'lar?"

"Not a bit of it? I'll tell you vot I'd do: I'd go to the t'other genelman comforble and quiet, and I'd say, Mr. Vot's-yer-name, ve're a conflicting together in this here business. Werry well, that's no hods; may the best man vin. Now look here: there's a squaddy of wagabones, vich vonts to sell there wotes, vich is werry onreg'lar, and don't ought to be. Werry vell. Now, I'll tell yer vot I'll do vith yer; I'll give yer my verd, vich in course is as good as my bond, that if you don't buy up these here warmant, I won't. Vot's the consequence? Vy, in course, they'd hold back till the last, a expectin', an' expectin', an' expectin' to be bought at their own walleation, an' at the close of the poll, the whole b'ilin' ud be done just as brown as a berry."

"That wouldn't be a bad move, mind you!"

"It's the only way to sarve 'em. They'd be so blessed vild they'd be fit to punch their heads off."

"Blowed if I don't name it to master!" cried Bob. "It's a out and out move."

And so it was in the abstract: nothing could be better. The conception did the venerable gentleman great credit. But he thought of the conduct of the principals only. He overlooked the fact that each candidate had a committee whose object was to ensure success, and who were not very scrupulous as to the means. It was possible that the candidates themselves would agree to a proposition of the kind, and would feel themselves bound to adhere to the compact; but the probability was, that towards the close of the poll, the committee, in the plenitude of their enthusiasm, would violate that compact in order to make all sure.

It was precisely in this light that Stanley and his immediate friends viewed the proposition when suggested by Bob, in the full conviction of its being hailed with loud applause. Their view of the case, however, was not explained to him. Unwilling to diminish his value by reducing his manifest self-importance, they told him that he was an extremely clever fellow; that the thing should be considered in committee; and that it was highly essential still to watch the movements of the patriots, and to report the very moment he heard of any offer having been made by the opposite side; the whole of which had great weight with Bob, who still imagined that the suggestion would of course be adopted.

During this conference, Venerable Joe was arraying himself in his masquerade dress; and, as he blackened his beard with burnt cork, and soiled his jacket and apron with soot, he looked, when his toilet was complete, like a highly respectable tinker.

Bob, whose habiliments were somewhat more tidy, did not quite approve of the *tout ensemble* of his venerable friend, and he said so, and in terms which could not be mistaken; but with all that delicacy of expression and tone, by which his delivery was distinguished in common.

The venerable gentleman, however, contested the point with great eloquence.

"I study natur'," said he. "The dress is nat'ral: verehas it voodn't be no how nat'ral if it looked as if I'd dressed for the part! that's the p'int. Look ear: you go to the play, and you see a willage scene. Werry well. The pheasants is all dressed reg'lar, with werry tight smalls, leetle jackets, and pumpe, cuttin' away like ingey rubber, and sportin' werry well-developed calves. Is this nat'ral? Ain't it heven, as fur as the dress is consarned, a werry bad imitation of natur'? Is pheasants got calves? Not a hindividual one upon the face of the blessed earth. They've got no calves at all—not the men: their calves all runs down right away into their boots; and as



for dancing ! they do dance like helephants ; they're werry heavy coaches ; the music, mind yer, must be cruel slow : they seem built hexpress to go along with the Old Hunderth : all vich proves wery clear to me that ven people attempts for to dress for a part, they ought to study natur'."

Bob perceiving the force of this analogy yielded ; and, at the appointed hour, they went forth to meet the Independents.

On their arrival, they found the room crowded, and all seemed exceedingly anxious to ascertain if any offer from either side had been made. The business of the evening had not yet commenced : they were waiting with great impatience for Mr. Jonathan Boggles, a respectable blacksmith, and a member of the committee, who, conscious of his importance, was invariably late. He did, however, eventually arrive, and his presence was hailed with enthusiastic cheering.

"Chair ! chair ! chair ! Mr. Boggles in the chair !" shouted the Independents simultaneously.

Mr. Boggles, however, sat with great humility near the door, until the question had been put and unanimously carried, when, with a show of reluctance, which did him great credit, for it seemed to proceed from a knowledge of his own unworthiness, he took possession of the chair amidst shouts of applause.

Every eye was now upon him : the anxiety which prevailed was most intense ; and Mr. Boggles having, with due deliberation, passed his blue cotton handkerchief three distinct times across his highly-intellectual brow, called with infinite presence of mind, for a pint and a pipe, and a screw.

Another wild exclamation of "Chair !" burst from the impatient patriots ; but Boggles sat with appropriate tranquillity until the pint, and the pipe, and the screw had been produced, when he majestically rose ; and as the most breathless silence pervaded the room, he was heard by all to say,

"Gents, we arn't heered noth'n."

This important announcement seemed to remove from the minds of all a load of suspense, albeit beyond that it clearly afforded no pleasure ; but as Mr. Boggles subsequently intimated, with all his characteristic conciseness, that he should be happy to hear any gentleman deliver his sentiments on the all-absorbing point, a patriot of some importance rose, and let the following eloquence loose :

"Brother townsmen : You've heered what the cheerman has said together, and yow knoo what to think on't as well as I can tell 'ee ; but if aither party thinks we shall move from our ground, they never was greater mistaken. [*Loud cheers.*]

We beant a-going' to do noth'n' of the sourt. [*Renewed cheering.*] I knoo what they are a-waitin' for together; they're a-waitin' to see which side we shall lane on; but we beant a-goin' to lane on noo side. [*Applause.*] What's it matter to us which gets in? What'll aither on 'em do for us? Noth'n'. Why should we put ourselves out o' the way then for them? If they have us they must drop someth'n' handsome: if they won't, they don't have us. [*Much cheering.*] We're not unreasonable together. We only want as much as we can get: we want noth'n' more. If we can have more from one than we can from the other, shouldn't we be fools not to take it? Why should we make any sacrifice for them? Would they make a mite o' sacrifice for us? Wouldn't they see us rot first? They're sure to have us. We've the power in our own hands, and we beant to be done. If naither offers noth'n', then comes our turn: we'll offer ourselves to Thorn, who's a-rollin' in riches, and if he doon't give what we want, he's the one to be punished: we'll wait till just the last, and then go up together and swamp him."

While the loud applause which honoured the conclusion of this oration was rushing through the circular ventilators, Bob and his venerable friend held a confidential conference touching the scheme, which they had previously deemed excellent, but which they now clearly perceived would be utterly ineffectual. He was therefore impatient to communicate this highly important fact to his master, and in the glow of his zeal was about to leave at once for that purpose; but his venerable friend detained him by suggesting the extreme probability of other points of importance being started; and several speeches followed, tending to illustrate the justice as well as the expediency of making Stanley the victim in the event of any "swindle" being attempted.

When this point had been carried *nem. con.* a rough red-headed genius rose to direct public attention to a general view of the matter.

"It has been stated," said he, "in the coorse of this discussion, that it doon't matter a boot'n to *us* as individuals which party gets in. I go further, and say it doon't matter a boot'n to the coountry at large, 'cause there's just six o' one and half a dozen o' the other. This coountry is goin' right under the table, [*hear! hear!*] and noth'n' can save it boot a roarin' revolution! [*Loud cheering.*] And what 'ud be the consequence of sooch a revolution, which soom weak-minded pipples dread? What 'ud be the consequence, I say? Suppose the whoole coountry wor in flames, and everything in it burnt to ashes! Is plenty of work good for the coountry? Is good wages good

for the country? If so, a revolution would be good for the coountry! And why? See what general employ it 'ud cause!—see what work there'd be to build it all up again!—see what wages poor men would have then! I'll tell you what together, I'm for making all level, and beginnin' again fresh!"

This generous sentiment was most enthusiastically applauded by all present, with the exception of Venerable Joe, who was the proprietor of sundry small houses, and with whose private interests the adoption of so sweeping a measure of reform would in consequence seriously interfere. He therefore intimated to Bob—who made it a point of discretion to applaud every speech—that he was about to reply to the red-headed gentleman; and although Bob endeavoured to dissuade him, by pointing out distinctly that such a proceeding would not be safe under the circumstances, he would not be turned from his purpose. He therefore rose, and the moment he had done so, there was a general whisper of "Who's he? D'yow know him? Who's he!"

"I've riz," said the venerable gentleman with great deliberation, "to hanser a hobservation wot dropped from the hindividual vich 'ad the honour to speak last. My hobject is for to say but a werry few vords; and fustly, I vish to arst him how, if he 'ad property, he'd like to have it knocked o' th' head in that there soort o' vay as he speaks on?"

"D'yow think," cried the red-headed patriot, "I wouldn't sell it afore the glory began?"

"But s'pose," pursued the venerable gentleman, "s'pose——"

"Down! down! down!" exclaimed twenty of the Independents in a breath. "Turn him out! Turn him out! He is not one of us! He's a traitor!—a spy! Turn him out!"

In an instant the room was in an uproar. Bob scarcely knew whether to withdraw his friend at once, or to fight through it, seeing that a strong disposition to do battle was becoming very manifest. The venerable gentleman wished to explain: he was very energetic in the expression of this wish; but no! nothing could induce them to hear him. He was a traitor!—they would have him out!—and were just on the point of proceeding to violence, when Bob, who would have struck down the first man that touched him, started up, and cried, "Leave him to me!" with an air of so much desperation, that they who were about to assail him stood off.

"Now, old gentleman," said Bob, winking slightly at his venerable friend, who understood it, "your conduct is very onregular. March,—afore I take you by the scruff of the neck."

The venerable gentleman deemed it highly correct to make

a show of resistance, when Bob at once seized him by the collar, and with great apparent violence forced him from the room amidst thunders of applause.

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE NOMINATION.

WHEN the expressed determination of the independent band had been communicated by Bob to the committee, they knew at once how to proceed ; for as Stanley was to be the first candidate applied to, only in the event of no proposal to purchase being made, it was clearly expedient to wait for such application, as the value of property, and more especially that peculiar species of property, so varies by circumstances, that in general a difference of something like a hundred per cent. fluctuates between an offer to buy and an offer to sell.

Bob was therefore instructed to keep an extremely sharp eye upon the patriots still ; and, stimulated by the applause lavished upon him for his vigilance, he continued to watch them with indefatigable zeal, albeit deprived of the companionship of his friend, through that venerable gentleman's unhappy indiscretion.

From day to day, as no offer from either party had been made, the anxiety of the independent people increased ; for although they possessed intact the power to punish either of the candidates, and thereby to have their revenge, they did not—looking at the thing in a purely commercial point of view—prefer that revenge, however sweet *per se*, to the more substantial coin of the realm ; which was indeed extremely natural, as well as very provident, inasmuch as the majority of them, having an appropriate contempt for the meanness of labour, lived in an enviable state of independence from year to year upon the golden produce of their electoral rights. Their indignation at the backwardness of those who had come forward can therefore astonish no right-minded man ; nor is it surprising that on the day of nomination they should have become so incensed at the ungenerous, unjust, and ungentlemanlike behaviour of the candidates, that they resolved to show him whom they conceived to be the richer, and therefore the more reprehensible of the two, that they were not with impunity to be swindled.

Now, although philosophical persons may carp at the novel knowledge about to be imparted, it may be held to be highly necessary that all the civilised nations of the earth should know, that in England, previously to the conscientious votes of a constituency being recorded, the candidates have to go through a

sound constitutional ordeal, involving the high and indisputable privilege of pelting, and hooting, and yelling at those candidates,—a privilege which forms one of the most characteristic and strongly-developed features of pure liberty with which a perfectly free and enlightened people can be blessed. That the glorious process of nomination throws a halo of security around our sacred institutions is a fashionable fact, plainly demonstrable by our very adherence to that process, and that the speeches delivered on that interesting occasion are essential to the existence of a good understanding between candidates and electors, is abundantly proved by the mere circumstance of those speeches being made. So also is the show of hands a glorious transaction, and as valuable as it is glorious, inasmuch as it amounts to a mighty demonstration of public opinion, which is of itself so conclusive, that it is in no slight degree remarkable that in a country like this the unpopular practice of demanding a poll should be tolerated at all.

It is however true, very true, that there may exist two rational opinions about that; but it is also true that there cannot exist two opinions about this, that when on the day of nomination the returning officer had deliberately read the writ, Stanley was proposed by a locally influential person, in a most brilliant speech, of which not a single syllable could be heard beyond "Brother Electors!"—Stanley Thorn, Esquire,"—"honour to represent"—"rampant faction"—"purity of election"—"the eye of Europe"—and "the last drop of blood in his veins!"

As it is just possible that it may be observed that this was rather extraordinary, considering that Stanley was the popular candidate, it will be proper to explain that the independent portion of the constituency—utterly disgusted with the prospect of being unbought—proceeded *en masse* to the hustings, with aprons, hats, and pockets full of turnips, carrots, cabbage-stalks, potatoes, and other equally handy vegetables, with the view of giving expression to the feelings by which they were animated in a manner the most striking and effective. They hated Stanley with a most correct hate; they felt that they had, by him especially, been treated with contempt; and as contempt is about the last thing which true patriots in general are disposed to endure, they resolved *in limine* to bring him to his senses; and when they had assembled, Bob, cognizant of this high resolve, pressed with unexampled zeal through the crowd to inspire them with additional ardour. Unhappily, they did not know Stanley, and a loud cry arose from time to time of "Which is he?"—some pointing, in reply, to one devoted individual, and some to another. Bob was well aware of their

lamentable ignorance in this particular, and resolving to take advantage of it, rushed with great presence of mind through the mass, shouting just as the person who had nominated Stanley retired, "Now then!—look out, brother boroughmongers!—fire!"

In an instant the hands of the independents grasped their ammunition, and as a gentleman stepped forward to second the nomination, they, mistaking him for the nominee, charged, and the air was darkened with vegetable matter.

In vain the unhappy gentleman thus assailed—being utterly unable to understand it, for he was sure that he had done nothing to offend the constituency—protested against this popular expression of public opinion; in vain the returning officer appealed to their deliberate sense of justice!—they answered by discharging fresh volleys of vegetables: they would not be influenced; their spirit could not be subdued; they were men, independent men, good men and true; in short men who knew their rights, and would maintain them.

"Fire!—fire!" reiterated Bob. "Wot! is Britons goin' for to be slaves!"

"No!" responded the patriots in a chorus of thunder, and again their ammunition partially shut out the light.

Now, it may be well known by experienced men, that there is nothing in a siege of this character so efficient as a turnip. It requires but a powerful aim and a strictly correct eye to make it go straight to the point proposed. Carrots are all very well in their way; but in general their flight is extremely irregular, while in unpractised hands they are apt to snap in the throwing: but turnips pierce the air in the most steady style; and albeit many inexperienced persons may prefer a potatoe, there seems to be no just or legitimate ground for such preference; for a potatoe has not half the moral influence of a turnip, because it does not, in proportion to its size, carry with it half the weight.

On this occasion the turnips did great execution. They went with force and dignity at the heads of the individuals by whom the platform was crowded, and whose gestures were in consequence less graceful than grotesque. With the exception of the returning officer, who for a small man was highly indignant, not one upon the hustings dared to face the besiegers. Some, with great self-possession, stooped down, and took a retrospective view through their legs; some witnessed the exciting scene by peeping occasionally over their shoulders; while others formed themselves into picturesque groups, each modestly striving to give the precedence to his friend by placing that friend just before him. Stanley, who enjoyed the thing exceedingly, was in a corner, properly panoplied by a beadle,

who, being an excessively corpulent person, shielded him with very great effect.

The platform, of course, was soon covered with vegetables: sufficient, indeed, had been poured in to stock a metropolitan market; but Bob, perceiving that the patriots had plenty still in store, was indefatigable in his efforts to urge them on.

"Keep it up!" he cried; "never give in! Now—now, brother-boroughmongers, at him! Hurrah!—I say," he added, privately, turning to his venerable friend, "jist cut away, and put missis up to it, will you, or else she'll be fit to break her heart. There she is, with old missis, and the Captain, in the carriage."

As the patriots, with deafening shouts, poured in their reserved ammunition, the venerable gentleman pressed towards the carriage; and, the instant Amelia saw him, she exclaimed,

"Joseph, for goodness sake! run to the hustings, and——"

"Don't be oneasy, ma'am, about it," said the venerable gentleman; "Bob's arrangin' on it beautiful, ma'am, a hinsinniwatin' into 'em that t'other genelman is him, so as the swells may exhorst theirselves of every hindividual wegeble afore his master comes forrard."

"What, was this attack intended for him?" cried the widow.

"It vos, ma'am: it's werry onreg'lar, but it vos."

"The brutes!" exclaimed the widow indignantly. "The wretches! Where on earth are the police? Why don't they do their duty? Run, Joseph, and tell him from me to leave the hustings this instant. Be quick, Joseph: there's a good man!"

The venerable gentleman at once started off to deliver his message to Stanley, while the Captain was endeavouring to calm the ladies' fears by explaining precisely the effect of Bob's *ruse*.

Stanley, however, felt that he had a great public duty to perform. He had to address the independent electors, which is so indispensable on the day of nomination, that it may with great propriety be questioned whether the wanton violation of that duty would not only ensure individual defeat, but strike at the very root of the British Constitution. It is no answer to this, nor is it a sufficient proof of the inutility of the practice, to show that of the speeches delivered on those high occasions it frequently happens that no syllable can be heard: it may be held to be distinctly and absolutely essential to the noble institutions of this country nevertheless. Individuals, it is true, may pelt. Why, let them pelt! Are free and intelligent men to be deprived of their liberties? They may drown every word—let them drown every word; are members of a civilized community to be gagged? Is the public voice to be stifled?

Are the people of this country to be prohibited from giving full expression to the sentiments and feelings with which they are inspired? He who would contend for the expediency of adopting such a course is no statesman. Besides, there cannot, by any possibility, be a stronger proof of the practical virtue of delivering speeches on these great occasions, in defiance of the people to whom those speeches are addressed, than that afforded by the fact that the ancient and fine constitutional custom is still adhered to by the most brilliant men of the age.

When, therefore, Mr. Swansdown had been nominated and seconded, and the whole of the vegetables had been duly discharged, Stanley came forth, and boldly faced the electors; but when the independent band perceived the error into which they had been led, when they found that they had been lavishing their favours upon the wrong man, and that they had not so much as a root of mangel-wurzel with which to honour the right one, they became at once so thoroughly disgusted with themselves that they scarcely knew how to give expression to their rage.

"Gentlemen!" said Stanley,—*"gentlemen!—gentlemen!"*

He could get no further. The patriots were resolved not to hear another word: they shouted, and bellowed, and yelled, and felt strongly disposed to make a rush, with a view to the restoration of their vegetable ammunition.

"Oh! *I'm* not going to talk to these vile dirty wretches," said Stanley, with great impropriety, addressing Sir William, who stood beside him.

"You had better say something."

"Of what earthly use is it when they'll not hear me?"

"Go on; never mind: tell them how you love them: you are sure to be faithfully reported in the papers. *They'll* make a speech for you. Do but keep at it for a time, and appear to be dreadfully energetic: that's the way."

Stanley accordingly set to work like an alarum bell, firmly determined that nothing should stop him. He shouted, and looked extremely fierce, and clenched his fist tightly, and sent in the crown of his hat, and assumed a variety of very imposing attitudes, apparently inspired with unexampled fervour; in short, he performed his part with so much perfection that at length even the independent patriots became amazed, and wished to hear what this palpable enthusiasm was all about; but the moment this natural wish became manifest,—the moment they were sufficiently silent to hear him—he concluded by saying, in a firm, loud voice,

"It therefore follows, that if you do but your duty to yourselves, my return will be triumphant!"



Mr. Swansdown then nobly stepped forward, and the contrast between him and Stanley was striking in the extreme. Mr. Swansdown was a man of mild and gentleman-like bearing, but he was at the same time remarkably short.

"Gentlemen," said he, at the very top of a very high voice, "I am proud——"

"Vot!" exclaimed Venerable Joe, who had stationed himself near the hustings, "air yer goin' for to 'ear that air leetle Lilliprushman speak ater yer voodn't 'ear t' other! Look at the little swell! Vy he 'd have to clamber up upon a cheer to scratch his blessed leetle head, he's sich a werry onreg'lar little dodger."

"Now, my brother boroughmongers!" promptly exclaimed Bob, "three reg'lar boroughmongering groans for the Lilliprushman!"

Three groans were accordingly started, but they were drowned by the cheers of the patriotic band.

"Gentlemen!" screamed Mr. Swansdown.

"Gentlemen!" echoed Bob, with a shriek which rent the air; and, as similar echoes were established among the crowd, they produced loud and long-continued laughter.

Again Mr. Swansdown tried back, and again; but these trials had no other effect than that of exciting a spirit of emulation among the masses, for each man strove to make his echo the most perfect. And it certainly was an unfortunate voice for an eloquent public speaker; but even this was not all, for, while his tones resembled those of an indignant cockatoo, his refined articulation partook of the character of that of Demosthenes before he had recourse to the pebbles.

At length, after making a series of unsuccessful attempts, he was clearly inclined to give it up in disgust, for the popular reflections upon his physical faculties wounded his private feelings deeply: as, however, an extremely judicious friend represented to him the absolute necessity for going on, and explained that, as these imitations were simply the development of their undoubted constitutional privileges as free and devoted Britons, they ought not to be condemned, he tried again to enlighten them; but, as the more energetic he became the more laughter he created, he had no sooner thrown them all into convulsions than he thanked them fervently for the patient and deliberate attention with which they had honoured him, complimented them highly upon the manifestation of their surpassing intellectual characteristics, and, with a striking expression of gratitude, withdrew.

The awful moment now arrived for the highly-constitutional show of hands to be demanded, and all living men by whom

the importance of this terrific process is appreciated properly, will admit that it is one of the most intense interest, inasmuch as the result involves the dreadful responsibility of demanding a poll. On this occasion the show was decidedly ten to one in favour of Swansdown, which was very remarkable, and, being quite unexpected, had a powerful effect. Stanley, however, by no means dismayed, demanded a poll on the spot: when the masses, having given him three terrific groans, and Swansdown three highly-enthusiastic cheers, formed themselves into groups to review the chief points, and dispersed without striking a blow.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE ELECTION.

ALTHOUGH Stanley's committee had been again and again assured that no offer had been made to the independent patriots, they now felt convinced that the Swansdown party had purchased them under the rose. The show of hands had amazed them; it afforded in their view an incontrovertible proof of a purchase having been effected, and, as without the support of the patriotic band success was utterly hopeless, they naturally thought that the time had arrived for their opponents to be boldly outbid.

On the other hand, the Swansdown party were equally amazed at the mighty demonstration in their favour. They had concluded that the patriots had been secured by Stanley, and that, therefore, they should lose the election, by means which would ensure their eventual success. Their energies had, in consequence, been devoted to the accumulation of sufficient facts to support a petition against Stanley's return; but the show of hands threw a new light upon the subject, and tended to inspire them with the conviction not only that the patriots had not been corrupted, but they had resolved to adhere firmly to those pure principles by which alone it was supposed the strict integrity of the British empire could at that particular period be maintained.

Stanley's committee, notwithstanding, at once opened a negotiation with the Independents, and assuming that their votes had already been bought, their first object was to learn the exact price at which the property had been sold. There was much tact and judgment in this, forasmuch as experience had proved to the committee that when electors have been bought by both parties, a great deal depends upon their honour, they knew that the development of that fine moral attribute could

be ensured only by giving the highest price. The patriots, however, solemnly declared that their property had not been purchased, which was repudiated at once as being utterly absurd by the committee ; who, nevertheless, agreed with them as to the price, and proposed that the payment should be made when the votes had been recorded ; but the patriots, exalted by the purity of their principles, spurned this proposal with flashing indignation as a direct and unwarrantable imputation upon their strictly public virtue. They would have the money down ; and they had it.

The great point now to be considered was, how to secure them. This puzzled the committee for some considerable time ; but at length, having consulted the best authorities on the subject, they inclined to the belief that the patriots would never dream of leaving a house while they were able to procure liquor gratis ; and that, therefore, on being made particularly bacchanalian, they would have no disposition to violate their honour.

A supper was accordingly provided at their own headquarters, and, touching the liquor, the host was instructed to let the supply at least equal the demand. This was done. A bottle of wine was placed by the side of each patriot to begin with, and jugs of ardent spirits were established at regular intervals in the most tempting manner that could be conceived. Accustomed as they had been to the liberality of candidates, this display quite surprised them. It won all their hearts ; and, as they partook of the wines and spirits with the most perfect freedom, and with an energy which was clearly indicative of the existence of an idea that they had not a moment to lose, they soon became in a most glorious state of affectionate philanthropy. Nothing could surpass their enthusiasm in favour of Stanley. He was a prince : his health was drunk fifty times, for each patriot felt himself bound to propose it the moment he had arrived at the verge of oblivion.

Having soaked themselves up to this point with wine, rum, gin, and brandy, punch was introduced, which, being a new and unexpected feature, was ladled out with great spirit, while it drank so excessively smooth that even those who had retained sufficient sense to suspect that they had had quite enough, were unable to resist the flowing bowl. They therefore drank, and drank, and dropped off as they drank, and as they dropped they were thrust beneath the table by the survivors, who gradually followed to a man.

When this consummation had arrived, the landlord extinguished the lights, and locked them up, and there they remained snoring snugly until eight in the morning, when Bob

and his venerable friend came down with a company of musicians, who aroused them by their correct and energetic execution of "*Hail, smiling morn.*"

At first the patriots felt rather confused, and looked about as if they did not exactly comprehend the true meaning of the extraordinary state of things which then existed. The host, however, supplied them with excellent purl, and their faculties, in consequence, became somewhat clearer; indeed, before an hour had elapsed, they were enabled to entertain a faint notion that they had been at head-quarters all night, which was really very singular. Still they kept drinking the purl—it was so strong and so refreshing—until the clock struck nine, when down came the carriages to convey them to the poll before it was possible for them to be tampered with by the Swansdown faction. Not a patriot, however, thought for a moment of deserting his colours then! They were all too happy—too glorious! "Thorn for ever!" was perpetually upon their lips. They would have voted for him for nothing if put to the test!—the purl was so good, and the music so enchanting. They were, indeed, all fervour, all enthusiasm; the excitement was delightful, and hence with joy they entered the carriages to place their votes upon record, surrounded by an enthusiastic mob of embryo patriots, and preceded by a banner, on which was inscribed, in letters of gold, "THORN, AND PURITY OF ELECTION."

This was the first grand step, and the consequence was, that at ten o'clock Stanley was eighty-a-head. The moral influence of this majority was powerfully felt: at eleven it had increased to one hundred and fifty, and at twelve it had reached two hundred.

The Swansdown party perceiving that, in order to succeed, they must make a mighty effort, now put forth the whole of their strength. The masters ran about like wild Indians to bring their men up to the poll, and so successfully were their energies brought into play, that at one o'clock Stanley's majority had been reduced to seventy-five. This was hailed as a glorious reaction; but more glorious still was it deemed when at three o'clock Swansdown was seven-a-head.

Now came the grand struggle. The excitement was hot. The supporters of each party darted from house to house in a state of intense perspiration, while the utmost anxiety pervaded the town. The agents of Swansdown would not bribe. It was amazing how immensely in their estimation the value of sundry small articles increased, and with how much avidity snuff-boxes, knives, pipes, paper-caps, sticks, and old stockings

were purchased ; but nothing on earth could induce them to bribe.

At this time both parties felt sure of success, although driven to the point of desperation. Bob, acting upon instructions, secured four electors who were reeling towards the poll to vote for Swansdown, and having, with the assistance of his venerable friend, got them into a carriage, drove out of the town. The widow saw this from the room she had engaged, and waved her handkerchief to express her admiration. She also saw, or imagined she saw, Mr. Ripstone displaying the utmost zeal in Stanley's favour ; but her faculties were so much confused at the time, that on reflection she felt that she must have been deceived. Just, however, as the poll was about to close, there burst forth an enthusiastic cheer, and, on rushing to the window, she saw him again leading on half a dozen electors. She could not be mistaken : it was indeed he—the kind-hearted, dear, good soul!—she felt ready to sink into the earth. He led them boldly to the booth ; they wore Stanley's colours—their votes were recorded amidst loud cheers—they were the last. The poll finally closed.

In due time the numbers were proclaimed. Stanley had triumphed!—he was fifteen a-head, and the announcement was hailed with reiterated shouts of exultation ; but the result was no sooner communicated to Amelia and the widow, who had been in a most painful state of excitement throughout the day, than they sank upon the sofa, and instantly fainted. The attendants were alarmed : they conceived that the nature of the communication had been misunderstood, and tried with zeal to bring them back to a state of consciousness in order to undeceive them ; but they remained for some time insensible as statues. At length, however, by virtue of the application of restoratives their perception returned, and again they had the happiness to hear that he in whom their hearts were centered had, indeed, been victorious. And oh, with what delight they felt inspired ! They embraced ; and while affectionately mingling their tears of joy, each chid the other for weeping.

Another mighty shout now arose, and on reaching the window they saw Stanley thanking the electors for the zealous exertions they had made in his behalf, and how noble he looked then in the judgment of Amelia may be conceived.

A messenger was instantly despatched to urge his return to them the moment he had concluded his address ; and as this was but a short one, he soon obeyed the summons, and by doing so deprived them of the power to utter one word of con-

gratulation. They flew to him as he entered the room, and embraced him, and kissed him with fervour, and sobbed like children upon his breast, but they could not speak.

"God bless you," said Stanley, who felt nearly overpowered; when, on turning to the window, he saw his opponent standing in the pillory by prescription, seeing that the electors of that enlightened borough held the process of pelting the defeated candidate to be one of their highest constitutional privileges, and they certainly did on this particular occasion exercise that privilege, not only with unexampled zeal, but without the slightest feeling of remorse, in consequence of Swansdown having dared to threaten a petition against Stanley's return. They had, therefore, no mercy; they pelted him with all their characteristic ardour, and continued to pelt him until he deemed it expedient to retire from the scene, when they marked his retreat with three glorious groans.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE CHAIRING.

As success had been held from the commencement of the contest to be sure, the chief preliminaries for the chairing had already been accomplished; and as from the hour the poll closed until midnight, Stanley, Amelia, the widow, and the committee, were occupied in giving additional instructions, the whole arrangements for the pageant were, before the time appointed, complete.

The returning officer had named twelve o'clock for the official declaration of the poll, and at that hour Stanley, accompanied by the General, the Captain, and Sir William, proceeded to the Hall in an open carriage, drawn by a mob of remarkably muscular electors, and surrounded by a patriotic multitude anxious to do him all possible honour.

On arriving at the Hall, Stanley entered with his friends, and took his station upon the platform, and almost immediately afterwards the final state of the poll was declared by the returning officer, who proclaimed Stanley "duly elected;" whereupon there were loud cries of "No, no, no!" but the voices of the dissentients were drowned in the general applause that succeeded.

Stanley then came forward, and in a brief but pointed speech, in which he acknowledged the high honour conferred on him, announced it to be the "proudest day of his life," and so on; after which he gracefully offered Mr. Swansdown his hand,

which was taken in a gentlemanlike spirit,—and having led him forward to address the electors, begged of them to give him a fair and impartial hearing.

The very moment, however, Swansdown stood before them, he was assailed with the most approved expressions of popular disapprobation. They would not hear a word he had to utter. Nothing could induce them for an instant to defer the active exercise of their constitutional power to groan. They would groan, and they did, until he became well convinced that any farther attempt to address them would be useless, when thanks were voted to the Mayor for his urbanity and general good behaviour, and amidst loud acclamations the Hall was dissolved.

Now came the great business of this memorable day. During the official declaration, and the important proceedings which were consequent thereon, the procession had been arranged with an appropriate view to the greatest possible effect; and on leaving the Hall with his immediate friends, Stanley was yielded up to the patriots, who led him at once to his brilliant car, and raised him in triumph aloft.

For some moments, having lost the point of sight, he was somewhat unsteady; but he was soon able to reconcile himself to his exalted position, and when he had done so, the glorious pageant passed in array before him.

First came two stout well-mounted trumpeters, each of whom rejoiced in a pair of balloon cheeks, which were blown out until in the annals of cheeks nothing like them could ever be found upon record. Then came the committee wearing scarfs and rosettes, while their horses—with their bridles and manes decorated with ribbons—were prancing and clamping their bits with delight, apparently proud beyond all other animals in creation. A magnificent banner followed, with "THORN AND LIBERTY" thereon inscribed. Then a military band, playing up with great power and precision; then various other banners, with appropriate inscriptions, the principal bearing the arms of the town; then a line of open carriages, with the Mayor, the chief members of the corporation, and Stanley's private friends; then another extremely powerful band; then a company of morris dancers, duly arrayed in a style the most grotesque, and performing evolutions of a character the most fantastic; then twelve blooming damsels attired in white, each bearing a basket of flowers, which they strewed with due foresight and skill.

When all these had passed in most admirable order, the triumphal car was turned, and Stanley joined the procession. It was then that he had a full view of the scene, which was

indeed on the whole most imposing. Independently of the regular inhabitants of the town, streams of gaily-dressed persons had poured in from the surrounding villages; and while the trumpets were sounding, and the bands were playing, and the bells were ringing, and the cannon at intervals roaring in the distance; the colours were flying, and the masses were cheering, and all seemed inspired with joy.

It is, however, necessary to mention, that this was not the end of the pageant. A vehicle, drawn by two severe-looking donkeys, immediately succeeded the car, and in front of this vehicle a machine was fixed, bearing a powerful resemblance to a gibbet, from which a well-conceived effigy of Mr. Swansdown was suspended, in a picturesque position, with a short pipe firmly established in his mouth, and his person thickly studded with crackers, while beneath him sat a gentleman, in the similitude of an unearthly personage, grinning with truly ferocious delight, and fiddling away as if he then strongly felt that he had not many minutes to live.

It may be added, as an extraordinary fact, that Stanley did not much approve of this highly characteristic exhibition, and therefore actually intimated something like a desire to have it suppressed; but the patriots, possessing a more exquisite taste for the sublime, and being, consequently, far more delighted with that than with any other portion of the pageant, would not hear of its suppression for one moment, and hence, having the power in their own hands then, the thing was preserved in all its pristine integrity, while the truly Satanic musician kept fiddling fit to break his heart, and thus the imposing procession moved on.

The reception Stanley met with as he passed was highly flattering. The ladies were especially delighted with his appearance, and waved their handkerchiefs in an absolute state of rapture; he was such a remarkably fine young man, such a really charming fellow, so handsome, so graceful, so excessively elegant. In nearly every window his colours appeared, while with the crowd he was an idol, he did distribute the handfulls of half-crowns and shillings at the corner of each street with so much liberality.

These scrambles were a source of great amusement, he having learned the art of making them to great perfection from the chief of the Sons of Glory. It is true there was no mud, which was certainly unfortunate as far as it went; but there was plenty of dust, which, when duly commingled with the perspiration of the patriots, had a very good effect, and more especially as, during the whole of the morning, they had been



paying their best respects to the barrels of beer which were freely established in all parts of the town.

Having passed through nearly all the principal streets, the procession reached the inn at which Amelia, and the most *distinguished* ladies of the borough, had taken up their quarters. Here a splendid triumphal arch had been erected, with the trellis-work of which wreaths of ribbons and flowers had been ingeniously and effectively interwoven, while the whole was surmounted with an elegant banner, presented to Stanley by the ladies of the town.

Beneath this arch, as had been previously arranged, the car stopped; and, as Stanley was acknowledging the joyous greeting of all around, a trumpet sounded, when the music and the cheering simultaneously ceased, and in an instant, as if by magic, a dead silence prevailed. Stanley, from whom this arrangement had been kept a strict secret, looked amazed; but, before he had time to inquire the cause, the poor children, belonging to the various schools to which the widow had sent munificent donations in his name, and who had been stationed upon platforms on either side of the arch, commenced singing a hymn, in which the blessing of Heaven was fervently invoked on the head of their benefactor. The effect of this was electrical: all were touched deeply: the handkerchiefs of the ladies were no longer waving, and even the hardy crowd, as the strains of the children fell like heavenly music upon their ears, and thus realized their conception of a choir of angels, were awed, and hundreds of men, whom few calamities could have softened, hundreds who had been shouting, and drinking, and acting in a manner the most reckless but a moment before, were seen wiping their eyes with the sleeves of their coats, as the tears trickled into their bosoms.

Stanley was much affected: he tried to conceal it, but could not; while Amelia wept and sobbed like a child: her heart was so full, and she felt so happy.

The moment the strains of the children had ceased, the trumpet again sounded, and again the enlivening music was heard; and when Stanley had directed the largest coin of the realm to be given to each child, to be worn as a medal in remembrance of him, the pageant continued its course.

At length it arrived at head-quarters—the inn at which Stanley's committee had been held—when the Mayor, and the members of the corporation, alighted, and having received their representative in form, they conducted him at once to the principal room.

The crowd had not, however, seen sufficient of him yet;

albeit he had been in his perilous position for nearly two hours—and that position really was one of peril, inasmuch as the patriots by whom the car was borne had been taking a little too much strong ale—they loudly summoned him again to appear, and he eventually obeyed that summons: he appeared upon the balcony, and the shouts with which they hailed him were tremendous. He then addressed them, and in his address thanked them for the enthusiasm they had displayed; and, having intimated to them that it was nearly three o'clock—an intimation which was well understood—he begged of them all to be merry and wise.

A circle was then formed in front of the inn, and when the wretched-looking effigy of Mr. Swansdown had been placed in the centre, the crackers with which his devoted person had been filled, were ignited, and blew him to atoms.

The patriots, bearing in mind the highly palatable intimation they had received, then repaired to the various houses of entertainment, at which enormous quantities of beef and plum-pudding had been provided; and at six o'clock Stanley sat down to dinner, with two hundred of the principal inhabitants of the town.

Here the utmost enthusiasm prevailed up to the hour of nine, when—that being the time for dancing to commence—the whole party retired from the table. Stanley opened the ball with the lady of the Mayor, and was delighted to see his guests so joyous and happy. Here, again, he was the admiration of the whole of the ladies, and Amelia won the hearts of all the gentlemen present. Sir William danced with the widow the greater part of the evening, and nothing could exceed her delight: he was so graceful, so attentive, so kind: she was in raptures. Mr. Ripstone was absent, which she could not but think very odd; but, then, Sir William was present; and, although Mr. Ripstone was a dear, good creature, Sir William surpassed him in every point.

Having danced with spirit until twelve o'clock, Stanley, worn out with fatigue and excitement, retired with his party almost unperceived; and when the carriages were ordered, the crowd, who were waiting outside to do him honour, insisted upon drawing him themselves to his residence, which was situated nearly a mile from the town. All opposition to this was, of course, vain, and the horses were accordingly removed from both carriages, the traces and poles only remaining attached; and, when Stanley and his party had entered, three cheers were given as the signal for starting, and off they went, preceded by a military band. Instead, however, of taking them directly home, they drew them round the town, which was brilliantly

lighted up, and it was not until they imagined that their chosen representative had seen enough of the general illumination that they would consent to proceed towards his mansion.

Having once got upon the road, they were not long before they reached the gates, and here they were met by enthusiastic thousands, who, by the light of large bonfires, had been dancing on the lawn. The committee had arranged this quite unknown to Stanley, and had instructed their agents to regale the happy multitude with boiled beef and beer.

This was, of course, a fresh source of delight to Stanley, who not only encouraged the dancers to proceed, but by way of acknowledging the compliment they had paid him, took the hand of one of the lasses, and having placed her at the head of about two hundred couples, led off the next dance, *The Triumph!*—much to the amusement of Amelia and her friends, who were enjoying the sport at the drawing-room window. This, however, settled him. The line for nearly an hour seemed interminable, for even those who had before no intention to dance, stood up, to have the honour of dancing with him. He did, however, at length reach the bottom, when, feeling quite sure that he had had enough of it, he restored his proud partner to her friends, and left the lawn.

A signal was now given, and in an instant it was answered by a grand and unexpected flight of rockets, and as this was succeeded by a really magnificent display of fireworks of every description, it was rationally supposed that the enthusiastic guests would withdraw; but no, nothing of the sort: although Stanley and his party retired to rest in an absolute state of exhaustion, the multitude immediately re-commenced dancing, and kept it up with great spirit until the rosy morning dawned.

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

### STANLEY'S INTRODUCTION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

BEING anxious to take his seat as soon as possible, Stanley prepared to return to town the following day. Amelia earnestly begged to be allowed to accompany him. She assured him that, notwithstanding the fatigue she had undergone, she was perfectly well able to bear the journey; and with feelings of the deepest affection portrayed the delight she should derive from merely going down to the House with him in the carriage, to see him enter for the first time that which she fondly conceived to be the theatre of his glory. Stanley, however, contended

for the imprudence of such a course, and came up with Sir William alone.

Having performed the distance with great expedition, they had an early dinner, and then went at once to the house. Sir William had previously explained how slight was the ceremony which had to be performed; still Stanley, as he entered, felt tremulous, and could not help wishing that the process of introduction had been over. With the exception, however, of being extremely pale, he appeared self-possessed, and after having been presented, took the oaths prescribed, and was greeted with loud cheers on taking his seat.

The House and its forms were quite new to him; he had never been previously, even as a "stranger," within its walls, and it must be confessed that his first impression was not of the most favourable character. He felt disappointed. The scene failed altogether to realise his anticipations; indeed, as he watched the preliminary proceedings, he could not but deem them in the last degree absurd. Petitions were presented, and when their titles had been proclaimed they were thrust without any further ceremony under the table. Bills were read for the third time, nominally—bills of great importance, affecting the interests of millions—and passed as if they were valueless; for they were utterly disregarded by the members generally, who appeared to be determined to uphold the reputation of the House as a deliberative assembly, by deliberating in knots upon matters of a purely private nature.

"Order!—order!" exclaimed the Speaker, whenever the buzz became in his judgment rather too loud, and as a matter of courtesy on all such occasions it was for a moment subdued, but it swelled again gradually until it resembled that murmur which floats upon the air of a well-conducted national school, when the Speaker again cried "Order!—order!" in a tone of great beauty and depth.

"Well," said Sir William, who sat next to Stanley, "how do you feel in your new position?"

"Disappointed," replied Stanley.

"Why, what did you expect?"

"More dignity, more solemnity, more attention on the part of the members, instead of this levity and noise. It seems to me to be rather an odd way of conducting the business of the nation."

Sir William smiled, and having observed that the business had not yet commenced in reality, told him to suspend his judgment until after the debate.

When the third reading of bills, the presentation of petitions, and a variety of other little unimportant matters, had

been disposed of, an honourable member rose to open a subject which led to a long and animated discussion, during which an immense amount of bitterness was displayed and applauded far more loudly than anything which absolutely bore upon the question at issue.

To Stanley it appeared that senators and actors were equally enamoured of applause; that the vilest characteristics of both were strengthened and confirmed by the cheers which they elicited; and that as upon the stage, rant and most unnatural acting were certain to strike those who had the strongest lungs, so in the House, personalities and senseless rancour, so perfectly did they meet party views, were hailed with rapture by the superficial satellites of faction, to the utter discouragement of natural eloquence, useful discussion, and sound, sober sense.

Of course Stanley never intended to be a silent member; he had resolved from the first to make himself conspicuous by taking an active part in the debates, in the full conviction that by getting well up in his subjects, he must of necessity succeed, and that signally, seeing that he intended to introduce a new style of eloquence which would be at once natural, forcible and suasive. The debate of that evening instead of shaking this high resolution had the direct effect of rendering it more firm; it excited his ambition in a greater degree than ever: he had no apprehension, he saw nothing to fear: he thought of nothing—dreamt of nothing, but speaking. He had the highest possible confidence in his own oratorical powers; he felt that he had the game in his own hands, and being then in a position to distinguish himself, he determined on making the most of that position; to study deeply, and to prepare to take the country by storm.

In the mean time, those whom he had left with his honoured constituents to settle the expenses of his election, were favoured from morning till night with demands of the most ingenious and extraordinary character. Butchers, bakers, drapers, poulterers, tailors, ironmongers, haberdashers, blacksmiths, weavers, farriers, saddlers, tallow-chandlers, fruiterers, post-masters, printers; in short, bills were hourly lavished upon them by respectable members of almost every trade, and the honour which under those peculiar circumstances actuates tradesmen in the aggregate, is, in general, not only conspicuous, but amazing.

The victuallers, however, were collectively the most aristocratic in their claims. Each assumed that he had a *carte blanche*, and felt strongly that in justice to himself, he ought, in filling it up, to have the highest regard to his own interest. The quantity of beer stated to have been consumed exceeded by

several thousand gallons the entire stock of the town; and had the charges for spirituous liquors been submitted to the excise-man, it would have tended to convince him that both smuggling and private distillation had been carried on to an alarming extent under his very nose.

As many of the claims sent in were of a palpably gross and flagrant character, the chairman of the committee—notwithstanding the widow's desire that all demands should be satisfied—resisted them on the ground of their being monstrous. He was willing to satisfy all just claims; he was willing to meet the demands, however exorbitant, of all who had the slightest foundation to rest their demands upon; but he refused to pay those who could have rendered no service, and by whom nothing could have been supplied.

The immediate consequence of this refusal was a meeting of the malcontents, at which it was unanimously resolved that such resistance to those undoubted rights and privileges, which they and their forefathers generally had enjoyed by prescription from time immemorial, was unconstitutional and rotten: that the claims they had sent in were customary, and therefore correct; and that from these premisses, it resulted that they were bound, in strict justice to their wives and families, to call into action all the energies of which they were capable for the legitimate purpose of "trying it on."

Having carried this strong resolution *nemine contradicente*, they had glasses round with the view of polishing their brass, and then proceeded in a body to enforce their claims.

On entering the room in which the chairman of the committee and his secretary were on the point of winding up the affairs, Mr. Bouncewell—who, being a highly respectable man in his way, had been appointed spokesman general on this occasion—said, with the air of a man conscious of the purity of his motives,

"We've come agin' about them there little accounts of ourn: question is, do you mean to settle 'em, or don't you?"

His colleagues, by whom he was backed, highly approved of this question, and winked and nodded with the view of intimating to each other that in their judgment that was the point.

"Gentlemen," said the chairman, with great calmness, in reply, "I must say that I am somewhat astonished, after what transpired when you did me the honour—"

"We don't want no flummery here," said Mr. Bouncewell, with very great impatience. "We didn't come here to have any long speeches; we ain't to be done in that there way; we came here expressly to give you another chance of settling

them there little bills without any more bother, so all you've got to do is to say in a word, you know, whether you'll pay us or not."

"If I thought for a moment that your demands were just, gentlemen, I would do so without hesitation; but as I feel quite certain that you have no real claim, I must beg, as before, to decline."

"Then we'll law you!" exclaimed Mr. Bouncewell: and his friends with an expression of ferocity cried, "Ay! and you shall have lots on it!"

"The law is open to you, gentlemen," rejoined the chairman, with great suavity; "you must use your own discretion."

"We'll smother you with actions, sir!" cried Mr. Bouncewell. "We ain't a-going to be robbed, don't suppose it! Do you think you've got hold of a pack of fools? Do you think we're a-going to give away our substance for nothing? If you do you was never in your life more mistaken. A pretty thing, indeed!" he added, turning to his companions, who pouted and frowned with due significance, "a very pretty thing! Here! a lot of respectable tradesmen, here, swindled out of their substance, and then can't get paid! Did you ever in your born days hear of such a thing!"

"Shame!—shame!" cried his colleagues, with deep indignation, for they felt altogether disgusted. "It's scandalous!—that it is—scandalous!"

"You may think so, gentlemen," said the chairman, with a politeness which was really very provoking; "but upon my honour I cannot agree with you."

"You can't?" said Mr. Bouncewell, sarcastically. "You see nothing shameful in plundering industrious, honest, hard-working tradesmen, eh, don't you? But what's the use of talking! You don't mean to settle with us?—that's to be understood?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll tell you what it is: we'll blow up the whole affair! We'll serve you out in that way. The other side wants information—we'll give it!—we'll tell all we know!"

"We just will!" cried his friends.

"We'll come forward as witnesses. We know quite enough to upset the election! We'll learn you how to be shabby! Do you think that'll answer your purpose?"

"Gentlemen," said the chairman, "you will pursue that course which you deem most correct. I have only to repeat that I cannot and will not entertain your claims."

Mr. Bouncewell then started a groan, which his associates responded to deeply; and when this had been accomplished to

their entire satisfaction, each gave full expression to his sentiments on the subject, and with a look of ineffable contempt left the room.

As this was the last application, the accounts were immediately closed, and as everything had been charged extremely reasonable considering, the sum total amounted to thirty thousand pounds.

This, however, utterly failed to alarm the widow. She would not suffer herself to think of the largeness of the sum. It was sufficient for her to feel that it had all been expended for the purpose of raising her Stanley to distinction ; and to achieve that object she could have borne to be reduced to comparative beggary herself. It was therefore with unalloyed pleasure that, when all had been arranged, she bade adieu to that place of which her Stanley was then the representative in parliament, albeit she knew that Swansdown and his agents were still displaying the utmost zeal.

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### CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN WHICH THE VENERABLE GENTLEMAN APPEARS TO BE CAUGHT  
AT LAST.

ON the arrival of the family in town, excitement was supplanted by deep and tranquil joy. The soul of Stanley had been fired with ambition. He studied zealously, and attended the House night after night ; but, although his return home invariably fluctuated between three and four in the morning, Amelia never felt solitary, never felt dull ; for she knew or believed, which had precisely the same effect, that the absence of her Stanley was essential to his success as a statesman, and was happy in the portrayal of the flattering details of a brilliant—a glorious career.

Now, it happened that, in proportion as the intimacy between Amelia and Miss Johnson became closer and more affectionate, the friendship subsisting between Bob and his venerable friend,—both of whom had been handsomely rewarded for their exertions during the contest, became warmer and more firm. They never appeared to be perfectly comfortable apart : they saw and drank with each other every day with the strict regularity of the sun ; and the venerable gentleman met with so much kind feeling, and withal such distinguished consideration in Stanley's kitchen, that almost every evening he called with the view of playing at the noble game of cribbage with Bob.

It frequently, however, happened that Bob was absent with



his master ; and on all such occasions the venerable gentleman had a game with Joanna the cook, and really experienced so much genuine lady-like conduct at her hands, that, instead of regretting Bob's absence, as at first, he began to like it rather than not.

The gentle Joanna had heard much of the venerable gentleman from Bob. She had heard of his high-toned gentleman-like bearing, of his honourable and strictly virtuous principles, of his brilliant conversational qualities, and of the general generosity of his heart. She had, moreover, heard that he possessed some considerable property, which, in her gentle judgment, imparted an additional lustre to the whole. She had, therefore, been powerfully prepossessed in his favour before she had the honour of an introduction ; and his conduct in her presence was so perfectly correct, that she felt a strong conviction that the high and noble qualities of his heart and mind had been to some considerable extent understated. It is true he was rather an elderly gentleman ; but it is also true that he was, in her opinion, an exceedingly nice-looking, elderly gentleman, who, although in reality sixty, might pass very well for forty-six or forty-seven, considering that the hair even of young men will sometimes turn grey !

There was, however, one consideration which—as she confidentially consulted her friend, the pillow, night after night—caused her to reflect deeply upon the solemn and irrevocable step she contemplated. This consideration was a high one,—it being no other than that of what the world would say,—and therefore one which induced her to pause, and very naturally, seeing that she was known, not only to the whole of her fellow servants, but to the milkman, the laundress, the baker's man, and the butcher. It was hence in her view of the deepest importance that due deference should be paid in this matter to the opinion of the world, knowing well, as she did know, that nothing on earth tends to promote human happiness more than the consciousness of being by the world looked up to and respected. For some time this objection appeared to be insuperable. She could not get over it. Many restless days and sleepless nights did she pass in deep reflection. She even went to the most eminent astrologer of the age for the purpose of having her nativity cast, and was greatly relieved when that profoundly learned person informed her that she would have two husbands, and be with both extremely prosperous and happy : it seemed to be so very conclusive. Still the question of what the world would say was continually upon her lips while she zealously racked her imagination to conceive a sound and sufficient answer to that question ; for she imagined, and very cor-

rectly, that, if the world should be up in arms in consequence of her marrying an elderly gentleman, it might to some extent interfere with her connubial bliss.

At length, however, having considered the matter in all its parts and bearings, she safely arrived at this conclusion, that it would not by any means become her to fly in the teeth of fate, and that, feeling quite sure that the venerable gentleman had been distinctly destined to be her first, it was her duty to surrender herself meekly to circumstances over which she could not be supposed to have control.

She therefore made a dead set at him at once, and called into action all her artillery, with the view of attacking his susceptible heart. She established in his presence one perpetual smile—which was indeed a very sweet one of the sort—sighed occasionally with very great effect, and glanced at him with constancy, and corresponding bashfulness, and frequently while playing removed the wrong peg, at the same time protesting that she actually didn't know what she was about—she didn't actually.

At the commencement of these affectionate proceedings the venerable gentleman rallied her gaily, and whenever he did so she felt herself bound to become so confused that she couldn't play at all, she couldn't count, she couldn't help pegging backwards, and the consequence was that she couldn't win a game; but, albeit these little manoeuvres were for some time regarded by the experienced eye of her venerable partner with suspicion, her emotion was so deep, and so strong, and so strikingly developed, that while he still entertained the belief that as a general thing love was a gross imposition, he eventually could not but feel that in the gentle Joanna he had discovered the exception that established the rule. He was sure that she loved him—fondly, passionately loved him; she couldn't help showing it! In his view a man must be blind who couldn't see it: the thing was so palpable: nothing could be clearer; and to be beloved at his age, and that, too, by a finely-built, cherry-cheeked, nicely-behaved, comfortable-looking creature nearly thirty years younger than himself, was an idea which flattered the venerable gentleman: he felt it very deeply, and thought of it constantly; and as he experienced a variety of sweet feelings which were altogether new to him, he resolved to be, if possible, more killing than ever, as the first grand preliminary to his seeing precisely what could be done. He accordingly became more refined in his language, and dressed with more care, and displayed more agility; and not only related the feats he had performed, but dwelt upon those which he was able with ease to perform then: in short, having the most tender aspirations

by which a lover could be prompted, he felt that his success as a lover was essential to the maintenance of his reputation as a man : although he knew that when two devoted persons try to win each other's hearts, they seldom, indeed, try in vain. He became much more constant in his visits, and was delighted when Bob was absent, which frequently happened, as he went with his master down to the House, and occasionally waited there for hours.

On one of these occasions, when the lovers had been playing at their favourite game for some time without the slightest interruption, the venerable gentleman, conscious of the high estimation in which wealth is held by ladies in general, and how greatly it assists the imagination in all matters of love, embraced a fine opportunity, which the fact of his having won ninepence afforded, for making the following remarkable observation :—

“Wot a hexcellent thing lots o' money is, ain't it?”

Joanna blushed deeply, and felt extremely tremulous ; but, conceiving it to be her duty to say something, she faintly replied —“Why, it certingly is an excessively excellent thing ; but happiness for me, Mr. Joseph, before all the money. Happiness isn't to be bought, for there's no shop in life where it's sold.”

“That's hall werry reg'lar,” rejoined the venerable gentleman. “You're quite correctly right in that air : still money's a hout and hout thing ! on'y go for to look at the advantages on it !—on'y see 'ow hindependent they are, them as does per-sees lots ; vile them as don't, is in a wuss state of slavery than the black poppation there out by the North Pole. They're never theirselves, them as ain't got no money. They can't hold their heads up : it's clean against natur'. Jist p'int out to me a hindividual a-vendin' his vay along the streets, on'y jist let me look at him full in the face, and if I don't tell you vether he's got any money or not, I'll be bound to be blessed ; cos he as hasn't, allus looks werry petickler down his nose ; vile he as has, takes about as much notice of that horgan as if he hadn't got one. He can't look right straight at yer, him wot's got all his pockets empty ; he can't ketch yer hearty and vorm by the hand ; he can't speak like a hinnercent man : his voice shivers and shakes jist for all the world as if it vos ashamed of itself ; and he mumbles, and trembles, and wobbles, vile the corners of his mouth drops right away down in the rottenest manner alive ; verehas, the man vich has got plenty in his pocket can look at yer fierce. He can take yer hand with henergy, and speak up as if he owed yer nothink, and vornt a bit afeared on yer, vich makes great hodd's ! Ven I meets a friend, now, vich ain't got no money, I don't like to

see him,—I can't say I do,—not a bit acos I'm spungy, or anythink o' that; but I'd rayther not see him. I some'ow or nother don't like it. I pities him; and, as pity wounds the feelings, it ain't consequentially pleasant. If a friend in them there circumstantialials ses to me, 'Have yer got sich a thing as a couple o' shillin's,' it cuts me to the quick; not acos I at all objects to lend it, nor cos I don't hand him over double wot he arsts for, and never expects to vitness agin the colour of the money, but it's cos it hurts my sentiments to see him, and wounds me to think wot his feelings must be. That's the p'int, you know! that's vere he feels it!"

"Exactly," returned Joanna: "you're excessively correct; but that warn't by no manner of means what I meant. I didn't by any means mean to mean that money was no object, or that it wasn't an excessive advantage: no, if I thought that, I should not have put by for a rainy day, as I have done. I shouldn't have thought of having such an amount as I have in the savings' banks at the present period of time. All I meant was, that money wasn't all; that money alone couldn't purchase happiness, and therefore that happiness was to be preferred."

"And in the long run I agrees vith yer. 'Appiness, in course, his the thing—the great thing: ve can't git through the world at all comfortable vithout it; but though it is to be found in hevery spere of society, from Vestmister to Vopping, vere can it be found without money? I don't mean to say that they're unseperateable,—that is to say, that verever there's money there must be 'appiness consequentially also; but I do mean to say, that verever there's 'appiness, there must likewise be money. There can't be no 'appiness vithout it. It stands to reason; it ain't nat'ral! Look at them vich is in debt: 'ow can they be 'appy?' I'll defy 'em to do it! It's out of natur' for 'em to be 'appy, from the highest spere down to the werry lowest,—from him vich owes his banker arf a million, to him as owes his chandley-shop-keeper arf-a-crown. It's onpossible! Look at me o'ny jist for instance. I've got seven houses vich brings me in fifty pound a-ear, all let to respectable tenants, substantial men of family vich never shoots the moon, and the writings is at home. Werry well. Now vot,—s'pose I should be throwed out o' place,—vot should I care, vith them to fall back upon? Nothink. But s'pose I hadn't them, and then vos to be throwed out vithout the prospect of gettin' another, vereabouts vood be the price of my 'appiness then? Voodn't it be out of all character for me to be 'appy? In course: vere poverty is, there 'appiness can't be. They never agree together; they're hallvays a-fightin', and poverty's safe to be victorious."

"I admire your mode of argument," observed Joanna, gently; "it's excessively intellectual and correct; but have you never, in the course of your extensive experience, found those that are poor as happy as those that are rich?"

"Vy," replied the venerable gentleman, knitting his brows thoughtfully, "that is a p'int vich requires to be explained. You see, the poor is sometimes richer than the rich; and, on the tother side 'o the pictur', the rich is sometimes poorer than the poor. I don't call him poor, however poor he may be, vich has got enough to keep him respectable in his spere; nor I don't call him rich, however rich he may be, vich hasn't got enough to keep him respectable in hisn. A rich man may be werry rich, and a poor man may be werry poor, and between them a werry great distinction may be drawed; but the poor man, vich has but twelve shillin's a week, and vith that can supply all his vonts, is richer than him vith ten thousand a-year, hif vith that he's onable to make both ends meet. That's the p'int! So, you see, I don't call the poor reg'lar poor vich has enough to make 'em comfort'ble and tidy in their vay; but ven a poor man is poor, vy he's werry poor indeed, cos he can't get no wittles; and, as 'appiness vont stay vere there's no wittles, the whole p'int dissolves jist to this, that the rich rich is 'appier than the poor rich, mind yer,—and the rich poor is 'appier than the werry poor poor, vich ain't got no wittles to eat."

"I understand you perfectly," said Joanna; "it's excessively clear, and precisely what I meant. I meant I'd rather be in a poor sphere of life, with sufficient to make me excessively happy, than in a high sphere, rolling in riches, without having happiness with."

"*That's* all reg'lar!" exclaimed the venerable gentleman: "ve're a-balancin' the werry same pole! 'Appiness, in course, is the uniwersal thing, and consequentially ve're halfvays a-yarnin' arter that vich ve think vill per cure it, and vich is nayther more nor less than money; for, although vot you say is werry true, that there's no shop in natur' vere 'appiness, like any other harticle, is ticketed and sold, there is thousands of shops vere it is, in a hindirect manner, to be bought; as, for hinstance, if I vos werry ungry, and unger vos the on'y sore place I had about me, a crust of bread and cheese and a pint of arf-and-arf vood make me 'appy; but, if I hadn't got no money to buy that bread and cheese and arf-and-arf, I shoold be werry onappy indeed. So, you see, it hall depends upon vether you can git vot yer vont: if yer can, in course yer 'appy: if yer can't, in course you ain't. For hinstance, now I vont a vife. If I could get one—a reg'lar good un—I should then be all right; but as I can't, 'ow can I be 'appy?"

Joanna blushed deeply as she observed, with a most expressive smile,

"Now, Mr. Joseph, you are joking."

"Not a bit," rejoined the venerable gentleman: "no, upon my honer."

"Did you ever try?"

"Vy, I can't sconsientiously say I ever did."

"Then how can you know? You cannot know until you try."

"But I'm gettin' rayther a hold feller now, yer know, inclin' as the poet says, 'into the wale of ears'; so that nobody 'll 'ave me."

"Nobody would have you!" echoed Joanna, with an expression of playful incredulity.

"Vell, who vood now? That's the p'int at hissue. Vood you?"

The ardent and affectionate heart of Joanna now violently throbbed; but, as she felt it to be her duty to blush and remain silent, she made no reply.

"Vell, p'raps," continued the venerable gentleman, as Joanna glanced most expressively at him,—“p'raps I put the p'int rayther too close, as yer werry perliteness vont let you say no.”

"Oh! it isn't for that," observed Joanna, very tremulously.

"Vell, then, I'll tell you vot I'll do vith you. Come, now, I'll bet you a pair of gloves that you can't, sconsientiously, mind yer, say yes."

"What a funny man you are!" said Joanna.

"It vood, I know, be a robbery. I know I shood vin."

"Do you think so?"

"Safe! Come, I'll make it two to one,—there, and put the money down: they shall be arf-crowners, double-stitched Frenchmen. Vill you take them ere hods?"

"You'd lose," said Joanna, with archness,—“you'd be certain to lose.”

"I don't think it, nor von't till I have lost. Now, then, vill you bet?"

"Why really!—Mr. Joseph!—I never knew!—it's such a very droll way of doing business!"

"Vot's the hods, so that business is done?"

"But indeed—depend upon it—you'd lose."

"Werry well. If I do, I shall have to stand the Frenchmen, that's all. Come, put the money down,—or I'll trust yer. Now, then," continued the venerable gentleman, kneeling upon the footstool beside her, and placing his ear quite close to her lips, "come, visper, and then nayther the kittles nor the sarcepans vont ear. Now, mark! Vood you 'ave me?"

The venerable gentleman patiently paused some considerable time for a reply ; but at length Joanna did sigh and say, "Now—really!"

"Only visper the word!"

"Upon my conscience I feel so frustrated; indeed so excessively confused, that I cannot for the life of me."

"Oh, but come—now then—vonce more. Vood you 'ave me?"

With a faltering voice, and a fluttering heart, the gentle creature, in a tone which scarcely violated silence, said—"Yes."

"You vood!" exclaimed the venerable gentleman,—"*sconscientiously!*"

He drew back a trifle; and, having gazed in a state of rapture at her lustrous eyes for a moment, threw his arm round her beautiful swan-like neck and clandestinely kissed her.

"Nay, you wicked man," said the blushing Joanna, "that's excessively naughty."

"Vell, give it me back! If you don't like to 'ave it, return it to the lips from vence it came."

"No, that I am sure I'll not do."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the venerable gentleman, throwing his arm again round her elegant neck, "I must test your sincerity!"

"Don't, Mr. Joseph: you'll rumple my collar: indeed, Mr. Joseph, indeed, indeed you will!"

Joanna struggled very correctly; but the venerable gentleman's ardour increased; and, just as he had succeeded in drawing her sweet lips to his, Bob, who had entered the kitchen during the struggle unperceived, cried "*Hem!*"

Had there been a trap-door beneath the gentle Joanna, through which she could at once have disappeared, her disappearance would certainly have been instantaneous, she felt at the moment so dreadfully alarmed; but as there happened to be no such a piece of theatrical machinery near her, she summoned all her courage, and turning promptly to Bob, said, "Isn't it too bad, Robert? Here, just because I happen to have won five shillings of Mr. Joseph, he vows he'll have a kiss, which is very unfair, Robert, isn't it now?"

Bob looked at her fiercely, and said in answer to this strong appeal, "It ain't nothing to me." He also looked fiercely at his venerable friend, and added, "I'm a-intruding."

These indeed were very cutting observations, and they had a very powerful effect. The lovers wished he had been at that moment drinking with Pharaoh and all his host; but as they gave no expression to that wish, he gloomily seated himself near the fire, and looked into it with a most ferocious aspect.

As the venerable gentleman could not of course feel exactly comfortable then, he soon prepared to depart: he took Bob's passive hand, and having bade him good night, Joanna saw him to the door, where he kissed her again, and, singularly enough, she returned it then without any struggling at all.

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## THE PETITION; ITS PROGRESS AND RESULT.

STANLEY had been nearly a fortnight in the House without having on any occasion risen to speak. During that time he had heard many excellent speeches, and many more which, although delivered in an execrable style, read and told well in the papers. His ambition had therefore been constantly strengthened, and as most men, who feel that they possess the power to shine in the particular circle in which they move, are desirous of cultivating those accomplishments, whatever they may be, by which applause is obtained in that circle, it is not singular that he, possessing the necessary confidence, panted to distinguish himself in that centre from which celebrity radiates throughout the world.

Having studied one important subject deeply, and made himself conversant with all its ramifications, he went down to the House on the fourteenth day of his being a member, with the view of startling the nerves of all parties by the development of what he had in him. Previously, however, to the commencement of the debate in which he intended to take a conspicuous part, an honourable member on the opposite side presented a petition against his return!

At the moment Stanley could, with great pleasure, have kicked him. He felt in a rage with that man. He might have been, for aught he knew or cared, a virtuous person; but as he returned to his seat with a calm but triumphant smile, having performed what he conceived to be his duty,—Stanley *looked* at him!—in one word, he certainly would have knocked him down, if the forms of the House had allowed it.

It is, perhaps, amazing that the strongest minds are capable of being upset in an instant. A man may have a perfect command over his features; he may have an equally perfect command over his nerves; but he cannot have a perfect command, nor anything like a perfect command, over his mind. He may be able to stand and walk erect; he may be able to maintain the steadiness of his eye and the firmness of his voice; he may be able to suppress every show of emotion, but he cannot.



suppress the emotion itself. He may have in full bloom what is technically termed "moral courage,"—for technical the term may be said to be, seeing that physical courage is hard to be defined;—he may be extremely calm and collected; he may conceal effectually his feelings from others, but from himself they will not be concealed. Within his own breast they are in full operation: their influence may rack him, although the effect be unseen; and precisely thus stood Stanley. He scorned to betray his feelings when the hateful petition was presented, but they were acute notwithstanding: indeed, so acute that they prompted him to withhold that brilliant speech with which he intended to astonish the House. The thing came upon him so unexpectedly, he was not prepared for the blow. He knew of course that the opposing party had been zealous in their efforts to get up a petition, but he had been led by his agents to believe that those efforts had utterly failed; when, however, he actually saw the unblest document, he could no longer lay the flattering unction to his soul which those agents had been from the first prescribing.

"I have been grossly deceived," said he, addressing Sir William, who sat by his side. "Those fellows assured me that the idea of a petition was, under the circumstances, absurd."

"Oh, it may come to nothing now," returned the Baronet. "This is the last day on which it could be presented. The prosecution of a petition does not of necessity follow its presentation. The chances are that it will yet be abandoned."

"I fear not," said Stanley.

"Why fear!"

"Because the grounds upon which they stand are too tenable to justify a hope that the thing will be relinquished."

"The grounds!" exclaimed Sir William. "The grounds have little indeed to do with the matter. It depends upon the committee. If you get a majority,—and, of course, we must have a whip for it,—you are safe: you need not care then a single straw about the grounds."

Stanley appreciated this remark very highly. He knew that, although in strictly barbarous states the system of trying the merits of petitions by a directly responsible tribunal might obtain, it would be in a country so enlightened as this repudiated, not only as ridiculous but dangerous, inasmuch as the practice established was of such surpassing excellence that it rendered the operation of party bias and factious influence almost impossible, and particularly in cases in which parties are so nicely balanced that the loss of a vote on either side is of very great importance: he knew also that every member was at that happy period an honourable man, and so strictly pure in

principle that he would rather see his own party go to the dogs than sacrifice or even slightly tamper with his conscience : he moreover knew that, albeit certain signally uncivilized persons had attempted to upset the just and most salutary system established, their attempts had utterly and of course most deservedly failed ; still, with all this knowledge, he felt apprehensive that, whether he obtained a majority or not his seat would be lost, and was therefore at first indisposed to defend it.

Sir William, however, powerfully painted to him the almost unprecedented folly of yielding, and as most men are guided by the opinions of others—if even they conceive their own judgment to be superior—provided always that their vanity is flattered, so Stanley, although he knew that the allegations contained in the petition were true, and that therefore, under the system proposed by the unconstitutional innovators referred to, he would have had no chance at all of retaining his seat,—surrendered his own judgment to that of Sir William, in the full and lively hope of being able to whip in a just and one-sided committee.

This hope, however, although it sustained him for a time, was not realised. The committee was moved for ; the whip was used on both sides with great effect, and the result was seven to four against him. The great point of Sir William was thus at once destroyed, and Stanley again felt disposed to retire ; but Sir William, knowing well what the expenses of defending a seat under the circumstances usually were, and being still sincerely anxious to reduce him to a state of destitution, shifted his ground, and not only ridiculed the idea of giving in, but contended for self-conviction in such a case being comparable only with suicide ; and in this he was ably seconded by the Widow.

"It would be, you know, such an extremely shocking thing," said that lady, when her opinion of the matter had been demanded ; "it would be absolutely dreadful—dear me, it would be an eternal disgrace—to retire from the field without a struggle, you know, my dear !"

"Mother," said Stanley, "look at the expense."

"A fig for the expense, my love ! we are not poor ! I look at the thing in the abstract !"

"You do, without reference to the cost. Look at that in the abstract ! I confess that I have an imperfect knowledge of the expense of these things ; but I know it to be something very, very considerable."

"Well, my love ! let it be considerable. Thank Heaven we are not beggars ! But we are not *beaten* yet ! Where is your philosophy, my dear ? Should we make ourselves wretched.

to-day because it happens to be possible for us to be wretched to-morrow! Oh, dear me no!" defend the seat by all means."

"Mother," rejoined Stanley, "you know me, I think, too well to believe that I would not do so if I saw the slightest prospect of success."

"My dearest boy, I know that you would not; I am perfectly certain of that; but then, although you cannot see this prospect, others can. Good gracious me! what does Sir William say?—does he not say that these things are all a lottery?"

"But how can we reasonably hope to succeed, when we know nearly all with which we are charged to be true."

"True!—my dear! Has not Sir William again and again said, that a thousand things may be true which cannot be proved?"

"I have of course no inclination to resign, which you know: if I conceived it to be probable that my seat could be retained, I would defend it with all the means in my power; but as the case stands at present I cannot perceive a chance."

"Oh, there are a thousand chances; rely on it, my love, there are ten thousand chances, although you do not perceive them. Besides, if even the worst should come to the worst, we are surely, my love, as capable of bearing our share of the expenses as the Swansdown faction are of bearing theirs!"

"But that may not be the worst. Suppose we are fixed with all the costs?"

"Oh, but you know, Sir William says that an instance of that kind has not occurred within his recollection!"

"But the thing is not impossible: it may occur in *our* case, and if it should, can it be borne without sensibly affecting your fortune?"

"Of course! Dear me, my love, what a ridiculous question!"

"Oh, I know nothing about your affairs: you have always most studiously kept them from me!"

"Fear nothing on that score; by all means oppose this horrible petition."

"Very well: but understand, that if opposed at all it must be opposed with spirit; no expense must be spared; there must be no stopping short; the thing once begun must be carried on boldly to the end!"

"That is precisely my feeling. Never mind the expense; do not dream about that. Have everything that may be deemed essential to success. We shall beat them? I am sure that we shall beat them. It would be such a truly dreadful thing, you know, my love, to give up all without an effort to retain it. It would look so cowardly, and would be so dis-

graceful, as Sir William *says*! I should go mad! I am sure of it. I never could be happy again. Therefore, oppose them, my love, by all means; oppose them with all your power. Engage the highest talent available. Stanley, my dearest love! let me prevail upon you: will you oppose them?"

Stanley consented. He had of course no desire to relinquish his seat: he never had; but knowing well that his election must have cost something very considerable, although the amount had been concealed from him, he felt, being ignorant of the Widow's resources, that the expense of opposing the petition—if the opposition *should* be reported "frivolous and vexatious," might involve them all in ruin. When, however, he heard that the worst could be borne without any material or permanent injury, he resolved to go on with the opposition boldly: he would not yield an inch; he defied them to prove their allegations, although he knew them to be true, declaring that his seat should be defended till the last. The battle then commenced. The opening speeches were made. Coach-loads of witnesses were brought up to town, and among them Stanley recognised many, whom, during the election, he had treated with the utmost kindness and liberality. On ascertaining the quarters of these people, he sent an agent to remonstrate with them; but they viewed the affair as a mere matter of business, declaring that they had no private feeling either way; that the franchise was a property of which they had a clear and indisputable right to make the most; that every contingency increased its value, and that if Stanley wanted them, why he might have them even then. The agent spoke of gratitude, of course, and enlarged on its brightness and beauty; and they agreed with him; they thought it an excellent thing, and they said so, and contended that its value should be commensurate with its excellence, and at the same time declared that they had plenty to sell, and should be glad to dispose of their whole stock at a price. As, however, it was deemed inexpedient under the circumstances to purchase this inestimable commodity of them—the investment not being quite safe—there was no business done; the agent left them in possession of their gratitude, which, if all had been taken at their own valuation, would have made a man wealthy indeed.

There was, however, another class of witnesses of a far more formidable character, inasmuch as they were actuated by feelings of revenge, and had a certain amount of social respectability about them which imparted a nominal purity to their testimony, and thereby gave it an additional weight. These were the tradesmen whom the chairman of Stanley's

committee had insulted by his shabby and unconstitutional refusal to meet their prescriptive demands. The rest of the witnesses against him cared nothing about the result ; they had no vindictive feeling to gratify ; their object was to make all the money they could, and it mattered not a straw to them which party triumphed ; but these men had set their noble souls upon his defeat ; they had firmly resolved to do all in their power to ensure his political destruction ; he had robbed them—for it is a real robbery, when the thing is properly looked at, to refuse to pay respectable men what is regular—and, therefore, they had one and all determined to stick at nothing which could tend to promote the accomplishment of the just and legitimate object in view.

The committee sat daily ; but their progress was but slow. The counsel on both sides displayed all the eloquence, zeal, and ingenuity they had in them, and bullied each other with admirable ferocity. On one point, however, they seemed to be agreed, and that was to make the thing last as long as possible. It seldom indeed happens in ordinary cases, that opposing counsel agree at all ; but it is an extraordinary fact, that in this case they were on that great point perfectly unanimous. During the examination of witnesses an objection was started at every third question with the utmost regularity and tact, and the speeches which succeeded those objections respectively were remarkable as well for their length as for the sound deliberation with which they were delivered.

After a week or two the honourable members of the committee became naturally tired of the business ; but the witnesses in the aggregate were by no means impatient : they cared not how long the thing lasted ; it met their views precisely ; nothing on earth could have suited them better ; they were not only living like Aldermen in town, but really beginning to get into flesh.

At length, when all concerned save counsel and these philoprophic witnesses, were weary, the labours of the committee were brought to an end, and the result was, that they reported the opposition to the petition "*frivolous and vexatious*," and thus fixed Stanley with the whole of the costs, which were enormous !

This to him and his immediate friends was indeed a heavy blow ; but poor Amelia felt it most deeply. Her anguish was poignant in the extreme, and while she tried to soothe her Stanley, whose high hopes had thus been blasted, she would hang upon his neck and sob as if her heart were breaking.

To Sir William and his associates, Stanley wished it to appear that he was comparatively indifferent about the matter,

but when in the presence of the widow alone, his rage could not be calmed.

"You see," he exclaimed, when the result became known, "you see the position to which you have reduced me!"

"I, my love?"

"Yes, mother, you!"

"Gracious Heavens! what can you mean?"

"Did you not prompt me to pursue this mad course? Should I have opposed this infernal petition had it not been for you?"

"My love! you know that I advised you for the best!"

"You advised me for the worst! You imagined, I suppose, that it would tame me. I was a fool to follow your advice; a wretched, a consummate fool!"

"Stanley! Stanley!" exclaimed the Widow, bursting into tears, as he fiercely paced the room. "Oh—this is cruel—very cruel. You ought not to be unkind, indeed, indeed, you ought not to afflict me thus! You should consider that I have feelings, Stanley."

"Mother, you do not consider that I have feelings!"

"I do: I do, indeed! I know that my poor boy must feel it most deeply: but do not, pray do not, add gall to this calamity; do not increase our affliction by attributing motives which you must know could never have actuated me. But, my dearest love, can we not appeal?"

"Appeal! No, there is no appeal."

"But the decision was corrupt, my love; grossly corrupt. The committee were guided by factious views solely, and while the counsel against us were demons, our own counsel ought to be ashamed of themselves for having suffered the fiends to go on so. Now, under these circumstances, you know, my love, it strikes me—"

"Again, I tell you, there is no appeal! And if there were; if even I could appeal, I would not. I know that these monstrous expenses must materially affect our fortunes. I am sure of it, quite sure, although you conceal the fact from me."

"They are indeed heavy; very heavy indeed."

"You admit, then," demanded Stanley fiercely, "you admit that they have involved us?"

"No, my love; no, no; they have not involved us. I said that they were heavy!—I merely said that. But come, my love, all will be well. Come, be calm and kind; you are my only joy; I cannot be happy if you are not kind."

The Widow again burst into tears and buried her face in his bosom. She knew that that which Stanley suspected was

true; she was conscious that these enormous costs, immediately following the expenses of the election, *had* involved her, and although she had yet but an imperfect knowledge of the extent, she knew well, that her position would be sensibly affected.

And Sir William knew it too, and was glad. The destruction of Amelia's virtue being his object, he now felt more than ever sure that that object would, at no remote period, be attained.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH A HIGHLY IMPORTANT SECRET IS DISCLOSED.

NOTWITHSTANDING the earnest anxiety of the Widow to disguise the real state of the case, her true position soon appeared. Persons may with success conceal their thoughts, their emotions, or even their wealth; but their poverty will not be concealed: it will out; it will make itself manifest: the more energetic may be the efforts to keep it from view, the more boldly will it rear its hateful head to proclaim its existence to the world.

If the Widow, when she found herself embarrassed, had immediately retrenched, all would have been so far well as that she might have been able, with economy, to maintain something bearing the semblance of her customary style; but as, instead of acting promptly upon the principle of retrenchment, she not only lived as before, but incurred those additional expenses which are invariably consequent on an ardent desire to preserve a reputation for wealth when the means have departed, the necessity in her case for selling out became so constant that in a short time she possessed but little stock, indeed, to sell.

This she concealed as long as possible from Stanley. She trembled at the thought of its becoming known to him: the idea was, in her judgment, dreadful.

"Oh!" she would exclaim in tones of agony, when alone, "what on earth would he say if he knew it! He must not be told: he would go raving mad! and yet, how can I now keep it from him? What am I to do? How—how can I act? I cannot—I dare not go on longer thus: he will be reduced to beggary! Oh! my poor boy! It is terrible—very, very terrible! The thought of it will drive me to distraction!"

But even this was not all. Had Stanley alone been concerned in the impending disclosure, it might have been borne:

may, she would then have summoned sufficient courage to impart the dreadful secret to him at once, for her embarrassments were daily becoming deeper and deeper still; but the thought of what Sir William would say, of what *he* would think of it, and how *he* would act, tortured her so cruelly that, although in his presence she wore a constant smile, and expressed the highest pleasure, her heart was in reality full of affliction.

And oh! how she then sighed and panted to hear him propose! She had been for many months in the liveliest anticipation of being blessed by receiving a proposal in due form, and yet, albeit, in her view, the question had been twenty times all but put, it had never been proposed with sufficient distinctness to warrant a formal consent. This was very distressing: it was indeed very. If he had but proposed to her then,—all might have been well,—all, at least, might have been without sorrow endured; but, although he still visited with all his wonted constancy, although he still conversed with his usual warmth and eloquence, she could *not* tempt him to come to the point.

At length, having waited for this important question until she began to despair, her difficulties became too palpable to escape even the tardy observation of Stanley. He had previously entertained suspicions on the subject; but, as he hated to enter into matters of a pecuniary character, those suspicions had not taken root: indeed could he have got from time to time the sums of money he required, things might have gone on and on for years, without his troubling himself to give the matter another thought. When, however, he experienced a difficulty in getting what he wanted, his previous suspicions were re-awakened, and he resolved to have them either removed or confirmed.

"Mother," said he, "yesterday I asked you for money. You put me off: you were anxious not to draw too close: I should have some soon; in a day or so; to-morrow, perhaps! Why is this? Why have you not plenty at your bankers! The time is come, mother, when I cannot but deem it necessary that I should know the cause."

The widow, without answering, burst into tears.

"Why, what is the meaning of this?" demanded Stanley, having regarded her intently for a moment. "There is something—*something* which you have hitherto concealed, but which must be concealed from me no longer."

"My poor boy!" sobbed the widow. "The dreadful secret must be told! I have struggled—Heaven knows how I have struggled—to keep it from you."

"What is it?" cried Stanley, with impatience.



"You will never be able to bear it : I am sure you never will."

"Whatever it be, mother, let me know at once, that I may at once guard against its effect."

"Those dreadful expenses, my Stanley !—those terrible expenses !"

"Have ruined us !"

"No—no—no—no— ! not ruined—oh ! Heaven forbid !"

"What am I to understand, then !" cried Stanley. "If they have not ruined us, what have they done ?"

"So embarrassed us, my Stanley, that you must—oh, how it afflicts me to tell you !—you must, at least for a time, manage to live upon the estate which was purchased for your qualification."

"Impossible ! How can I live on a pitiful three or four hundred a year ? How can I entertain those friends whom I have been in the habit of entertaining ? how can I meet them ? how can I even show my face ? Mother !—"

"Stanley, do not be rash : pray do not be impetuous ? You will break my heart ! indeed, my love, indeed it was all done for you. Come, come ! You *will* be calm, dear Stanley ? You will be calm ? You will not make this wound deeper than it is, or cause it to rankle, dear Stanley ! Heaven knows I would have given worlds if this dreadful disclosure could by any earthly means have been avoided."

"Why did you not tell me before ? Why buoy me up with the hope—nay with the absolute belief, that our fortunes had not been materially affected ? Why did you not explain to me at once that we were ruined, beggared, comparatively beggared !"

"I dared not ; indeed, my love, I dared not do it. I dreaded nothing on earth more. But, believe me, dear, I'll make every sacrifice in my power to promote your happiness still."

"Sacrifice ! What sacrifice have you now the power to make ?"

"I'll reduce my establishment ; I'll put down my carriage ; I'll do anything in the world to diminish my expenditure ; indeed, dear, I will ; I'll live retired—quite retired. I shall be happy—I feel I shall be happy—very happy, if you are but so."

"Don't talk to me of happiness, mother. How can you, or I, or any one be happy when fallen ? The idea is monstrous ! You now perceive the consequence, I hope, of endeavouring to conceal everything from me."

"Believe me, dear Stanley, I did all for the best."

"But do you think that if I had known what I ought to

have known, I would have opposed that petition? Do you *think* that I would have been guilty of an act of madness so palpable, so glaring? Why was the thing kept from me?"

"My love, you know that I am at all times unwilling to annoy you. You know that if it were possible to prevent it, I would not have your mind distressed for the world."

"Well!" cried Stanley, still pacing the room with violence. "The thing is done. The die is cast. We are ruined. Now, I suppose, I *may* know something of your affairs!"

"My dear Stanley, all shall be explained."

"I insist upon having all explained."

"You shall have it, my dear: yes, believe me, you shall. But, although very terrible, it is not so bad as you imagine—it is not, indeed."

"I do not imagine that we are reduced to actual destitution; but I do imagine that henceforth our position will be sufficiently mean to cause society to shun us. I can't live on three or four hundred a year."

"I know—I know you cannot; nor will there be any necessity for you to endeavour to do so: I feel perfectly sure that there will not. No—no, my dear, things may yet be better than you suppose—much better. Let us hope for the best. I am sure I do not know myself yet how we stand. But my affairs shall be immediately adjusted—yes, I'll have them all investigated properly, and at once; and then we shall see, dear Stanley—we shall see."

Stanley was sullenly silent. A dreary prospect opened to his view. And in the whole social scale, there is, perhaps, no position so annoying, so perpetually painful, or so pregnant with temptation to dishonour, as that of a young and ardent spirit, who—being without influential family connections, and, at the same time, without a profession—finds himself suddenly thrown upon his own resources, or placed below the sphere—be that sphere what it may—in which he had theretofore moved. The uncontrollable nature of circumstances renders the folly—it may be termed, the thoughtless cruelty—of teaching young men to depend solely upon the wealth of relatives, instead of giving them a profession upon which to fall back in case of need, so conspicuous, that it is, in truth, amazing, when reverses of fortune so constantly occur, that the paltry pride of parents, on this great point, should be suffered to supersede their manifest duty.

This darkly appeared to Stanley then; and the more darkly, seeing that he had no direct knowledge of the position to which he had been reduced; but the widow, being far more sanguine, scarcely gave this a thought: her strongest

apprehension was that of losing Sir William; it was that which, in reality, afflicted her most, and, being almost unable to endure the thought of the discontinuance of his visits, she would have gone on as usual, in the lively anticipation of a formal proposal being made, had not Stanley, being impatient to know the worst, insisted upon an immediate investigation of affairs, which accordingly commenced without further delay.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHOWS HOW A RECONCILIATION TOOK PLACE BETWEEN BOB AND HIS VENERABLE FRIEND.

WHEN the reduction of an establishment is about to take place, and more especially if the establishment be an old one, whatever, may be the tact with which it is managed, whatever may be the secrecy with which you proceed, it is perfectly sure to be generally known: indeed, any attempt at secrecy does but increase the evil, inasmuch as it establishes a mystery, and mysteries are invariably pregnant with conjectures, which are certain to make the thing worse than it is.

Now this is, of course, a remarkable fact, and one, moreover, ascribable solely to one's utter inability to get rid of servants, under the circumstances, with any degree of quietude or comfort. When these useful people have long been in the habit of giving "good satisfaction," they well know that they would not be discharged without a cause, and you cannot—no act of caprice can—deprive them of the additional knowledge of whether their conduct, in reality, constitutes that cause or not. If it do, why there, of course, is an end of the matter; but if it do not, they watch events narrowly, and if none be engaged in their places, they see how it is, and never fail to report what they see; in fact, they deem it their duty to do so in their own justification, and that they ought to be justified, is strictly correct.

Now in this particular case, the afflicted widow no sooner found it to be necessary for her to relinquish her carriage, and in consequence, to discharge her old coachman, and several other servants, than the news flew with such unexampled rapidity, that on the evening of the memorable day in which the servants had notice, Bob received the following letter from his venerable friend:

"Genal Johnsones Stables.

"DEER ROBERED,

"allow i aint Seed nothink on yu fore A werry konsidder-

bell peerid off thyme sirkumstanhalls Is cum toe mi nollege  
 witch korses Me fore to feel werry fillisoffocle about yu kors  
 hive A inkellinashun fore toe think frum wot hive eared yule  
 bee throwed out off plaice if so and yule kum and pig we me hit  
 sharnt kost yer a apney for nothink wile yer out and I des say  
 i kan get yu into somethink as soon As i kan for beein out is  
 onkommon heckspensayve an noboddy dont git fat at It speshly  
 as thymes is werry rotten but wy Dont yu Do me the  
 onner off a korel hay kum there Aint no malliss kum an letts  
 ave a Drain toogether As we yoused korse yu hare a goodd sort  
 sort an i never took yu fore nothink ellse so No more at pres-  
 sent from yure Werry pertickeller friend joseph coggles."

The immediate effect of this generous and gentlemanly epistle was to throw the whole of Bob's mental faculties into a state of confusion. He read it again and again, with a view to understand not only the words, but the feelings by which they were prompted. It was the first formal letter he had ever received, and while it tended to raise him in his own estimation as a person of importance, it amazed him, for he had really entertained no suspicion of that which the venerable gentleman had intimated with so much distinctness. What could be the meaning of it? What had he done? He was sure that he had been particularly attentive of late. Besides, he had heard no complaint. Had any pernicious person succeeded in secretly subverting his fair reputation? Could it be possible?

As he sat in silent solitude, upon half a truss of hay, in the stall which invariably formed his studio, he weighed with the utmost nicety, the bearings of each conjecture as it arose; but having been thus engaged for some time, without being able to arrive at any really satisfactory conclusion, he started up with the full determination to ascertain what it meant, from the lips of his venerable friend.

It is true, very true, that in saluting Joanna, the venerable gentleman had annoyed him, and yet, on serious reflection, why should he feel annoyed? What was Joanna to him? She had been kind, she had been friendly, she had made suet dump-lings exclusively for him, and had prepared hot suppers almost every night during his master's parliamentary career, which was certainly very affectionate; but then, had he ever proposed to Joanna! Had he ever even led her to believe that he wished to propose? Nay, had he that wish? Decidedly not! at least, not that he knew of. Why then should he feel thus annoyed? He had no right to entertain any such feeling. He would be annoyed no longer! He made up his mind at once not to be annoyed, and having done so, he started off to have this deep mystery solved.

On reaching the General's stables, he beheld in one corner his venerable friend, sitting studiously upon a basket, duly turned upside down, with a pen in his right hand, and the forefinger of his left upon his temple, labouring to turn a bright conception into shape, with an expression of the most intense thought. The very instant, however, he became conscious of Bob's presence, he relinquished his pen, and greeted him in his usual affectionate style, by striking a pugilistic attitude, of a character extremely scientific and picturesque.

Having squared at each other with great ability for some time, they simultaneously seized each other's hand, which they shook with remarkable fierceness and affection; and when these, and other equally indispensable preliminaries, had been to their mutual satisfaction accomplished, the venerable gentleman broke silence by expressing, with all his characteristic eloquence, the unexampled gladness of his heart.

"But Bobby, my Briton," he added, "wot's the matter atween us? Friends vich is friends, shoood never be on-friendly!"

"I'm not unfriendly!" said Bob.

"There you are! the hold business hover agin! the sum total mounts ony to a misanderstandin, and cert'ny misanderstandin's is the rummest things alive. Vy, wot d'yer think the hold General did the other day now? I'll tell yer: two friends of hisn had a sort of a misanderstandin' about nothink: they wos werry cold, and coodn't ha' told vy, if they'd bin arst. Werry well, wot does he do, but he goes to the basket, and picks out their cards, and then sends 'em to each other's houses as if they wos sent by theirselves! Wot was the sconsequence? Vy they at once returned wot they both took to be the compliment, boney fido, and as each flattered hisself that the other had made the fust advances, and wos willin' for to meet him arf vay, they met, in course, for all the vorld as if nothink had happened, and a reconcilementation took place."

"Well, that wasn't a bad move, mind yer," said Bob.

"It wos hexcellent, cos they on'y wanted for to be brought together to be all right agin. And that's the case with all these here misanderstandin's atween friends. But it's all reg'lar now atween us? Eh? Give us yer 'and! Let's go over to the tap, and say nothink more about it."

To the tap they accordingly went, and after touching slightly upon the state of the nation, and two or three important political points which were just then at issue, Bob being impatient to have explained to him the various intimations contained in the venerable gentleman's epistle, produced that mysterious document, and having read it with due emphasis, begged to know what it all meant.

"Wot does it mean!" cried the venerable gentleman, elevating his eyebrows in a state of amazement. "Wot ain't you then seed your old missus's coachman?"

"No," replied Bob, "not lately."

"Vell, but do you mean to say you don't know there's a screw werry loose?"

"Haven't heard nothing of it."

"Vell, send I may live! Vy, the 'stablishment's going to be broke up reg'lar!"

"You don't mean *that*!"

"But I do, and nothink but! Coachman was ere last night as ever wos, to explain the ole business, and the peticklers cert'ny looks werry queer. He's got vornin'; they've almost hall on 'em got vornin', and from wot I can learn things is goin' hall to smash!"

"You don't say so!" cried Bob, whose countenance developed the utmost astonishment. "You stagger me regular. I thought they had a mint."

"And so they had; but coachman tells me thish ere parleymentry business 'as kicked it all down."

"Ar, I thought they was going too fast."

"And so did I," rejoined the venerable gentleman; and it really is amazing how prone men in general are to anticipate things when they have actually taken place, and how fully their conjectures then are borne out by facts. "It struck me frequent," he continued, "that they never cood stand them air evey expenses. But I'm werry sorry for it; cos, from what I 'ear, your master's got nothink but wot he 'as from the old lady; so if *she* goes, he must go vith her."

"Safe!" returned Bob. "And it hurts my sentiments very acute, 'cause he is a trump, and there can't be two opinions about it. But what I look at most is missis, 'cause she is a regular good un, and I'd go to the bottom of the sea to serve her. What must her feelings be, mind you, eh? I don't think she knows a bit about it as yet; but when she comes for to be told, eh? Safe to break her heart."

"I don' know," said the venerable gentleman. "Vimmin genelly bears these rewerses much better than men. And it likewise makes 'em more dewoted. I've seen it frequent. Ven all goes on prosperous, they've plenty of scope to make theirselves onhappy about nothink, and feels theirselves at liberty to pitch into their husbands, cos, as they don't vont for nothink, they don' know wot they vont; but on'y let their husbands have a reverse, and they're at once all affection. Vot is it they voodn't do then if they cood! And if they can't get 'em over it, they'll kiss 'em. and make it seem better than it is, and try

to persuade 'em not to mind it, and get 'em to bear up against it like men. That's the pint! Vinmin is rum swells to deal with."

"I agree with you there," rejoined Bob. "But I say! ain't your principles on this here particular p'int a leetle changed, eh? Didn't you used to tell me, that when things went wrong, they'd pitch into you the more?"

"Ar," replied the venerable gentleman, whom the question had slightly confused, "that's ven they're reg'lar hout an' hout wixens."

Bob shook his head. He perceived at a glance the inconsistency of his venerable friend, and being anxious to know the extent to which his opinions upon the matter had changed, he took occasion to intimate gently that he had an idea that the views which he had once entertained on the subject of matrimony were not precisely those which he entertained then.

"It strikes me forcible," he added, "that they're, in pint of fact, particularly different; 'cause I, somehow or another, have a sort of a notion, that you and our cook is a managing of matters, do you know."

At this moment the venerable gentleman blushed—ay, actually blushed!—but on recovering himself a trifle, he smiled, and said, "Vy, Bobby, vot makes you think so?"

"'Cause she's a continually sighing and talking about you, and looking arter the postman, and receiving of letters, which is writ in a fist wery simular to yourn."

Again the venerable gentleman looked extremely red. He saw at once that, in sending a letter to Bob in an undisguised hand, he had not acted with his customary caution.

"You write a decent stick, though," continued Bob, playfully. "The i's is all dotted, and the hizzards is wery respectable."

"I see," said the venerable gentleman, shaking his head with great significance, "I see I've let the cat out of the bag. But it ain't of much odds, cos I don't 'spose I'm puttin' *your* nose out of j'int?"

"Not a bit of it! Oh! it ain't no odds to me, you know. Only all I look at is this,—she's a cook, you know, and cooks is all warmant, eh?—dont you recollect!"

"And so they are," returned the venerable gentleman,—*"so they are, in common course of natur";* but Joanna is one in fifty million! That's the p'int! I'll be bound to say you don't find another sich a cook in a day's march!"

"She's a good 'un of the sort," observed Bob, cavalierly.

"A good un! I believe yer. There's no mistake about her!"

"But however you come to be caught after all your expe-

rience, is a thing which gets quite over me. I can't at all understand it. A deader mystery I never come across."

"Vy, look ear," said the venerable gentleman, with a philosophic aspect. "Did you ever 'appen to see an unexperienced young greyhound a-playing with a leveret, a-rolling of it over and over, and a-pawing it, and licking it, and not exactly knowin' vot to do with it?"

"Can't say I ever did."

"Did yer ever see a kitten a-playing with a mouse, a-purring and singing to it reg'lar, a-letting of it run, and springing arter it agin, vile the little onfort'nate wictim is arf dead with fright!"

"Yes, that I have seen."

"Werry well, then, wot do they play with 'em for? Ain't it cos they know nothink about 'em? Ain't it cos they never tasted the blood of them there animals, and don't know wot it is? Vy, in course. But let 'em jist valk their teeth into one, —let them have but one taste, and they're always then a-hankerin' and yarnin' arter 'em wiolent. And that's the case vith me. I never loved reg'lar afore: I never knowed wot it was to love; but now that I've tasted it and knows wot it is, and finds it nat'ral to like it, I can't never be 'appy vithout the object of that love, vich is her as I know loves me. That's the p'int."

"Well," said Bob, "I hope she'll turn out a regular good un."

"Safe to be a good un! Safe to 'appy! She's the kindest and comfortabest creature in life. I never see her feller, and I've seed above a few on 'em in my time, you know. She's cert'ny hout-an'-hout."

"Well, all I can say, you know, is, may she never be anything but. They do, mind you, sometimes turn out queer."

"But you *don't* s'pose I've lived all these here 'ears for nothink! No, no, Bobby; hold birds ain't ketched vith chaff, I *shood* be blind if I couldn't tell wot a voman wos. I can see right clean through 'em in a hinstant. No—come, we ain' a-going to be done exactly arter all this 'ere experience, nayther!"

"Well, well," said Bob, "you *ought* to know a little about it."

"I flatter myself," returned his venerable friend, "I just do."

"Well, and when do you think about doing the trick?"

"Vy, that depends a little upon circumstantialials. If your 'establishment's broke up, yer know, as vell as the old lady's, vy, it von't be vuth vile for her to take another place."

"No, more it won't," observed Bob. "But don't it strike you as very strange that I ain't heard nothing about it?"

"The most singularest thing alive!" returned the venerable gentleman. "They ought, at least, to 'ave named it, if they if they did nothink helse."



"But do you know, now, I don't think it'll be so after all."

The venerable gentlemen admitted that such a thought as that might be entertained, but strongly advised him, nevertheless, to prepare. He then repeated those generous offers which his gentlemanly letter contained; and when Bob had acknowledged, in grateful terms, the friendly feeling by which those offers were characterised, they pressed each other's hands, had another pot, and parted.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### IN WHICH STANLEY RESOLVES TO RETRIEVE HIS FORTUNE.

ALTHOUGH the news of the reduction of the widow's establishment travelled fast from Bob's venerable friend to the General's cook, from the cook to the lady's maid, from the maid to Miss Johnson, and from that young lady to the General, both he and Captain Joliffe, whom he subsequently told, deemed it a point of too much delicacy to justify any direct inquiry into the matter.

The first object of Stanley—when he found that all he had to depend upon was the estate, which yielded barely three hundred a-year—was to conceal the altered state of affairs from Amelia; and when he had taken steps to accomplish this, at least for a time, he devoted all his energies with the view of retrieving their fortunes.

But then how was this to be done? Should he enter the army? No; that would not do. Should he endeavour to obtain some colonial appointment? He had not the slightest wish to leave England; and even if he had, where was his political influence? He thought of a hundred things by which his position might be improved, but not one which was, under the circumstances, practicable.

At length Sir William—who had never allowed a syllable having reference to these embarrassments to escape him—became acquainted with a project by which he fondly hoped that Stanley might be involved in utter ruin. At that time several men of high connections, one of whom was by courtesy an Earl, having lost on various occasions immense sums at play, and being experienced and highly accomplished gamblers, conceived the idea of taking a house themselves, and putting down *sub rosa* a bank of their own. This they fancied would be a most profitable speculation; and as the aid of Sir William, by whom they were all perfectly well known,

had been solicited, he held it to be an excellent opportunity for sinking the remnant of Stanley's fortune, by inducing him to join them.

He accordingly lost no time in communicating with Stanley on the subject, but took especial care to proceed with the utmost caution. At first he mentioned it as a mere matter of news; but when he found that Stanley caught at the project, he gradually entered into the most minute explanations, and made the success of the scheme appear certain.

"Well," said Stanley, when the matter had been explained, "why don't you join them?"

"Why, you see, I have at present so much on my hands, and the probability is that it would divert my attention from matters which require a deal of thought. Besides, you know, I'm not a very speculative man; and these things, to succeed, must be entered into boldly."

"Of course nothing but strict honour is intended?"

"Why, the character of those who are engaged in the scheme would alone, one would think, be a sufficient guarantee against dishonourable practices."

"Of course! But is it not singular that men of their character and standing in society should descend to enter into a speculation of the kind?"

"Why, the descent of itself is not very tremendous. The difference between playing against a bank and playing with one—except in so far as the profits are concerned—is but slight. They would not, of course, like it to be generally known that they were engaged in a speculation of this sort; nor would they, in fact, like it to be generally known that they frequented houses of that description at all; but in the abstract it certainly is as honourable to put down the bank as it is to play against it."

"It merely struck me at the moment as being rather singular."

"And so it is. If it were usual, it would be thought nothing of."

"Well," said Stanley, "the idea is certainly novel. I should really like to join them."

"I should recommend you not."

"Why?" inquired Stanley.

"Merely because I think that it might occupy too much of your time. Besides, Thorn, when you play, it is solely for pleasure: now their sole object is profit. There is another thing; they have of late lost considerable sums of money, which they are resolved to regain, and it is moreover necessary that they should do so; but you are not in that position."

"Perhaps not," rejoined Stanley, whom the reason assigned urged on the more. "But when we play, as you say, for pleasure, is not profit invariably the chief object we have in view? Are not the pleasures of play derived from winning, coupled with the hope of winning more? Are losses productive of pleasure?"

"It certainly is not very pleasurable to lose; but that is an altogether different thing. Here we have a direct and well-organized speculation, the object of the speculators being to regain a certain sum. That their object will be accomplished there can be but little doubt; but then look at the anxiety!—what can repay them for that?"

"The attainment of their object! Now it appears to me to be the very kind of speculation into which I should like to enter."

"Well,—but that which I look at is the necessity which exists in their case, and not in yours. Of course I'll introduce you with pleasure, and I am sure that they would like you to join them exceedingly; but if you do, you must expect to be annoyed—at least I know that the constant settlements, the division of the profits, and all that sort of thing, would annoy *me*."

"Very likely. But I have not, you know, so much to attend to as you have, which makes all the difference. When shall I see them?"

"Oh! we'll go when you please—this evening, if you like; but I should advise you, before we go, to think the matter over."

"Yes; that of course I'll do. Well, shall we say this evening!"

"Oh yes! I'll call for you. At what hour?"

"You may as well dine with me, and then we can start from here direct."

"Very well; be it so. I have a few little matters to attend to this morning, and while I am about them you can be turning the thing over in your mind; but still, if I were you, I should say it would be scarcely worth my while to trouble my head about it. However, it is for you to decide. We shall again see each other at seven."

Sir William then left, and as he entered his cab—"Every man," thought Stanley, "knows his own business best. He has no idea of my real position. His advice, therefore, goes for nothing. He still thinks that I am wealthy. He has not the slightest notion that my necessities are as great as the necessities of those whom I shall join. It is hence that he

conceives that I shall deem the constant division of the profits an annoyance !”

Stanley smiled at this idea, and then proceeded to calculate what the profits of such a speculation were likely to be ; and while he was thus engaged,—with the gain of tens of thousands floating upon the current of his rich imagination,—Sir William, who was by no means so ignorant of the matter as Stanley supposed, was conversing with the projectors of the scheme, and representing Stanley as being a young fellow who had brilliant expectations, and would be an unquestionable acquisition, if they could but secure him.

“ But is he likely to be caught ?” inquired the noble Earl.  
“ Will he come in ?”

“ That I must leave entirely to you. He is to be managed.”

“ Has he much stuff in hand ?”

“ Why, it matters but little, you know, whether he has or not.”

“ His paper is good, of course ?” interposed “ Captain” Filcher, who had engaged to be the nominal proprietor of the concern.

“ Safe as the bank,” replied Sir William.

“ Then of course,” rejoined Filcher, “ it’s regular.”

And so it was in his view, and also in that of the noble Earl, who expressed an anxiety to see Stanley, and begged of Sir William to bring him that evening, in order that he might at once be fixed, which Sir William promptly promised to do ; and they parted.

During dinner, although no word was spoken on the subject which Amelia could understand, Sir William perceived that Stanley’s views were unaltered. He was therefore in high spirits, and conversed with unusual animation, and studiously applauded every sentiment which Amelia advanced. His marked attention to her would, in the mind of a stranger, have excited suspicion ; but his freedom of manner and of speech had been so cautiously, so gradually assumed, that its progress had been to them imperceptible.

“ I wish your mamma were here, Stanley,” said Amelia, on the table being cleared.

“ Yes,” replied Stanley, “ she would have been company for you while we are absent.”

“ Then are you naughty people going to leave me ?”

“ Business, my love, business. I shall not be late.”

“ Oh ! I anticipated quite a delightful evening.”

“ For my part,” said the wily baronet, looking at Stanley,

“ I think we had better remain where we are.”

“ There’s a good creature !” cried Amelia. “ You ought to

he recognised generally as the champion of the ladies. Is it of importance, dear Stanley?"

"It is my love. I must go; but I shall return very early."

"Well, do not let me interfere with business. But how long shall I give you? Shall I say twelve o'clock?"

"Do not name any time, because I like to be punctual; and if we say twelve o'clock, I may stop till that time, when otherwise I might be home earlier."

"Very well; but return as soon as you can—there's a dear."

"You really are an admirable wife," said Sir William, to whom the gentle affection displayed by Amelia was wornwood.

"Now you are pleased to flatter," she returned, with a smile.

"No, upon my honour."

"Well," I appreciate your good opinion," rejoined Amelia, gaily. "Stanley ought in due form to acknowledge the compliment, seeing that he has made me what I am. We must ascribe all the merit to him. Admirable husbands make admirable wives—is it not so?"

"It is amiable on the part of those admirable wives to think so."

"Nay, but is it not so in reality?"

"The belief, I fear, is not universally entertained."

"I should say not," interposed Stanley. "The most brutal husbands have the most gentle wives; and, as you see in my case, the more mild and affectionate a man is, the more advantage his wife takes of that mildness and affection, the more she will tyrannise over him, and make him feel her power."

Amelia smiled, and was about to concede that, with the thoughtless and the vulgar, it sometimes happened that both husbands and wives took advantage of amiability and devotion; but as Stanley at the moment gave the signal, they rose; and on taking leave, Sir William pressed the hand of Amelia with so much warmth, that although she attributed it to nothing but the purest friendship, she felt an almost involuntary inclination to withdraw it. The effect, however, but was but instantaneous; she bade him adieu with her wonted smile, and then embraced Stanley with the fondest affection.

Having entered the cab, Stanley, being impatient, started off with so much swiftness, that Bob—who had anticipated nothing of the sort, and who had to run like lightning for five hundred yards before he could catch the cab to get up behind—very naturally conceived that there was something additional amiss.

"Another blessed screw loose!" said he very privately to himself. "I'm glad he's got somebody with him; although as it is, I must mind what I'm at. In this here ticklish state of

transactions, masters ain't very particular about gratitude ; and there's something a little extra o'clock to-night, I know !"

The expediency of looking out with an eagle's eye having thus appeared clear to his view, he leaped from behind with such amazing alacrity when Stanley pulled up, that he was at the head of the horse in an instant.

"Another blessed four o'clock business," said he, muttering with great caution, as Stanley and Sir William entered a brilliantly illumined club-house. "When every individual winder's in a blaze they pints to four or half-past, safe ! *Won't* you stand still?" he added aloud, addressing his horse, "or am I to go for to make you ? Don't you think I've enough to put up with ? Ain't it ten times worse than 'listing for a soger ? As true as I'm alive masters now-a-days ain't got no bowels for servants at all !"

Whereupon he stepped leisurely into the cab, and having driven a short distance from the door, he adjusted himself snugly in the off corner of the vehicle, with the view of having a few hours' soft repose.

On entering one of the private rooms of the club, Stanley was formally presented to the noble Earl, Captain Filcher, and two other dashing persons, who appeared to be highly pleased to see him. They had evidently been entering into certain calculations having reference to the scheme, the result of which had put them in great spirits ; but no allusion whatever was made to the project for some considerable time.

At length, having freely conversed on the various topics of the day, and become thereby better acquainted with each other, the noble Earl opened the subject of the speculation, the success of which he described as being perfectly certain ; and having dwelt upon the brilliant character of the anticipated profits, and proved in theory all that it was necessary to prove, Stanley became so satisfied that he entered at once into his views, and expressed himself anxious to join them.

The noble Earl of course explained how happy he should be to have him as a partner in the speculation, and as his title, independently of his gentlemanlike bearing, had great weight with Stanley, he felt highly honoured.

"And what will it be necessary for us to put down?" he inquired.

"Why, according to our calculation," replied the noble Earl, "a capital of ten thousand will in all probability realise a hundred thousand pounds in three months. But we need not put it all down at once. Let me see ; there are five of us. Of course we must expect to lose a trifle at first—it will in

fact be expedient to do so. Now, I think that if we each of us put down five hundred to begin with, it will do ; but, of course, it will be well, in order to make all sure, for each to be prepared with two thousand."

This proposition was made to all concerned, and agreed to, and when the agreement had been drawn up and signed, they set aside all business, made an appointment to meet the next morning at the house which Captain Filcher had partly engaged, and spent a jovial evening together.

On the following morning they accordingly met, and were all much pleased with the house ; and as Filcher had had some experience in fitting up "clubs," he undertook to prepare it with all possible expedition. But Stanley was *in limine* puzzled. How was he to raise his share of the sum required ? He could no longer draw money of the widow. Should he mortgage his estate ? As this appeared to be the only way in which it could be managed, he resolved at once to do it ; but as on the day in which this resolution was formed he happened to call at the club, to see what progress had been made, and found Filcher alone, his views on the subject were changed.

Filcher, who had received certain hints from Sir William, regarded this call as auspicious. He was therefore unusually anxious to win Stanley's confidence, and after showing him the furniture he had hired, and the tables he had purchased, and explained certain mysteries of play, he got him over a bottle of wine, and became excessively communicative and friendly.

"I don't know, of course, how you are situated," said he, when he fancied that Stanley had been sufficiently warmed, "but men who have the power to command a mint of money are not at all times flush. I merely allude to this in order to intimate that if you should at any time happen to be short, I have already so much confidence in you—and one can always tell pretty well what a man is—that I shall be happy to lend you my acceptance. But, mind, this is strictly between ourselves. I do not wish it to go farther, because in the present state of the world there are few men indeed whom I would do it for on any account ; but for you I should be proud to do it, if such a thing should ever be required, to the extent of a thousand or so."

"Well," said Stanley, who was struck with the friendly feeling displayed by Captain Filcher, "I certainly feel flattered ; and it strangely enough happens that I was just about to raise a sum of money by way of mortgage."

"Bills are much more convenient. They save a world of

trouble. They have but to be drawn to command the sum required, and when met at maturity the thing is at an end. What sum do you want to raise?"

"I thought of two thousand."

"Well!—I shall be happy to lend you my acceptance for that amount."

"But what security shall I give?"

"Your honour, Mr. Thorn, will be a sufficient security for me."

"But I think that every man ought to have some more tangible security than that."

"Oh, nonsense!—not among friends!"

"I should feel more satisfied."

"Well, if that be the case, give me your acceptance for the same amount. I positively refuse to take any other security from *you*."

This was kind, very kind, on the part of Captain Filcher. Stanley at least strongly felt it to be so, and inquired when the bills should be drawn.

"When you please," returned the Captain. "It may as well be done now as at any other time. Let me see—instead of having one bill for two thousand, you had better have four, you know, for five hundred each. You will find them more negotiable."

"I must be guided by you," observed Stanley, who at the same moment drew out his purse. "Can we send for the stamps?"

"By the by," cried the Captain, drawing forth his pocket-book, "it strikes me I've a lot of stamps here!" And it singularly enough did happen that he found just eight of the very stamps required.

"Well," said he, "this *is* extraordinary! I knew that I had some, but I had no idea of what they were. They will save us the trouble of sending out for them, at all events."

Stanley agreed with him perfectly in this, and offered to pay for them; but the Captain refused to receive a single shilling. "No," said he, "I am not a dealer in stamps. They are of no use whatever to me, and may as well be filled up for this purpose as not."

The bills were then drawn at two months. At the suggestion of the Captain, the dates were slightly varied. He drew four, and four were drawn by Stanley; and, when each had accepted those which the other had drawn, they exchanged acceptances as a mere matter of mutual security.

"Have you any channel open?" inquired the Captain, when the exchange had been made. "I mean," he added, perceiving



that he was not understood, "do you know any one who will discount those bills?"

"Upon my honour, I do not. I never had occasion to draw one before. But I suppose there will be no difficulty at all about that?"

"Oh! not the least in life. I'll undertake to get them cashed for you at once."

"I don't like to trouble you," said Stanley; "but at the same time I really wish you would."

"My dear fellow, don't name the trouble!" cried the Captain. "I'll do it with infinite pleasure. You shall have the cheque in the morning."

Whereupon Stanley returned him his own acceptances for the purpose of discount, and having warmly acknowledged this additional obligation, left him in possession of the whole of the bills.

The next morning he called for the promised cheque, and found the Captain excessively busy with the workmen, who were engaged, under his superintendence, in decorating the principal drawing-room, apparently for some immediate purpose.

"My dear fellow," said he, as Stanley entered, "those things cannot possibly be done until to-morrow."

"That will do quite as well," replied Stanley.

"I thought that it would make no difference to you?"

"Oh dear me, no, not the slightest. But what room is this intended for? You appear to have been very expeditious in fitting it up?"

The Captain smiled, and drew Stanley aside. "You have heard nothing of it, then?" said he, *sotto voce*. "This room is being adorned to give *éclat* to a private marriage. It will take place this evening by *special* licence. Will you join us?—it will be delicious sport."

"But who are the parties?"

"I am bound not to tell that; but you know the bridegroom. Say you will be here. It will come off precisely at eight."

"But will my presence be agreeable to those most concerned?"

"Agreeable! My dear fellow, they will all be delighted. You positively *must* be here!"

"Well," returned Stanley, "in that case I'll come. But I should like to know who the parties are."

"All in good time, my dear fellow," cried the Captain. "But the thing must positively be kept a profound secret until the job's done."

"Oh, ho! I comprehend!" said Stanley. "Papa is in the way."

"Out, my boy!—for once in your life out! There's no papa in the case; and what is more, my dear fellow, mamma will be here! At half-past seven, recollect, you will have the felicity of being presented to her and the beautiful bride. You will not therefore on any account fail?"

"I will not. But don't let me interrupt you another moment. For the present, adieu."

"Adieu, my dear fellow! Remember the time! When you know all, my boy, you'll say it's delicious!"

"This is strange!" thought Stanley, on leaving the house. "And I know the bridegroom! Who on earth can it be! Can it be Wormwell? Very likely: and yet he surely would have named it to me at least! Well, it is useless to conjecture."

And so in reality it was; but his imagination was fraught with conjectures nevertheless. There was a mystery in the matter, by which his curiosity had been strongly excited, and that excitement continued throughout the morning unsubdued.

He was therefore, as a matter of course, punctual; indeed he was there somewhat before the appointed time, and found the bridegroom to be his new friend the noble earl, who presented him at once to the bride.

Well, as far as the bridegroom was concerned, of course the mystery was solved; but in his view there was something mysterious still. The bride!—true, she was rather a beautiful girl, but she was evidently not a lady, while her mamma—Stanley *couldn't* understand it! He tried to converse with the bride; but "Yes, sir,"—"No, sir," and "Very, sir," appeared to be about the only original sentences she had the ability to utter. Her mamma, however, made up for all, by announcing it loudly to her settled conviction that special licences were far more respectable than banns.

"Why, I say," cried the Captain, when the hour had arrived, "where's the *reverend* swell? Time's up!"

"Oh, he'll be here shortly," returned the noble Earl.

"He is safe to come, I suppose?"

At this moment a carriage drove up to the door, and almost immediately afterwards he, by whom the ceremony had to be performed, walked solemnly into the room. As he entered, he bowed profoundly to all around; and as the bridegroom promptly asked him to take a glass of wine, he as promptly filled a bumper, and winked at the bridegroom, which Stanley conceived to be particularly odd. He remained, however, silent; they clearly understood it, although he did not; and the ceremony, without the smallest loss of time, commenced.

"Dearly beloved," said the reverend gentleman, "we are gathered together here for the purpose of joining this man and this woman. Wilt thou have this woman? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, and keep her?"

The noble earl answered, "I will."

"Wilt thou have this man? Wilt thou obey him, love, honour, and serve him?"

The bride tremblingly faltered out, "I will."

"Who giveth this woman to this man?"

The Captain took the hand of the bride, and gave it to the reverend gentleman, and when he had transferred it to the noble earl, the ring was put on, and the ceremony ended!

Stanley stood amazed, and the bride's mamma observed that the ceremony, she fancied, was rather short, but suggested that it was in all probability unfashionable to have it longer, when performed by special licence. She was therefore quite satisfied: and having taken just sufficient champagne to cause her to be content with almost anything, she began to extol, with surpassing volubility, the prominent virtues of "my daughter the Countess, and my dear son-in-law the noble Earl."

The Captain then called for a bumper, and all charged.

"I give you," said he, "Health to the Bride and Bridegroom! I propose it thus early, because I know that as they have to travel some distance to-night, we shall soon be deprived of their charming society. The health of the bride and bridegroom!—the bridegroom and the bride!"

The toast was duly honoured, and the noble Earl in an eloquent speech returned thanks; shortly after which he, his trembling bride, and her delighted mamma, took leave and started in a carriage and four.

The very moment they had left, the reverend gentleman threw aside his surplice amidst loud roars of laughter.

"What is the meaning of this?" inquired Stanley of the Captain.

"What! don't you understand it?"

"Upon my honour, I do not."

"Then it's no longer surprising the old woman was deceived. Don't you think it was done admirably, considering our parson is not in orders?"

"You do not mean to say that this has been a mock marriage?"

"Why, of course! It was the only way in which that girl could be had! Mild and gentle as she appears, he has been trying in vain to seduce her in the regular way for the last six months."

Stanley was so indignant on receiving this intelligence, so

incensed at being thus made a party to a proceeding so vile, that he rose on the instant, and quitted the house with a feeling of ineffable disgust.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE COMMENCEMENT OF STANLEY'S SPECULATION.

To those who have been accustomed to view only the unamiable portions of the female character, as developed on the one hand by the restless scheming creature of the world, and on the other by the designing hollow-hearted courtesan, the mean, cowardly practice of defrauding a woman is sport ; but by married men, who have studied the character deeply, and who appreciate those beautiful feelings by which it is essentially distinguished, that practice is happily held in abhorrence. Marriage induces a higher estimation of female virtue : it inspires men with a chivalrous, gallant spirit, of which the peculiar promptings are to those who never experienced the blessings which spring from the gentle characteristics of an amiable wife, altogether unknown ; and hence Stanley—he being the only married man present during the performance of the disgraceful, cruel mockery detailed in the preceding chapter—was the only man by whom it was not viewed as a jest. But although he was thoroughly disgusted with the heartless conduct of his new associates, he felt bound to fulfil the engagement into which he had entered, but from which he would then most gladly have withdrawn. He had no longer the slightest confidence in the men ; he conceived it to be almost impossible for them to be actuated by any correct feeling,—still, having entered into the speculation so far, he was unable to see how he could with honour retire.

Having reflected upon the matter for some time, vainly hoping for something to suggest itself whereby the speculation might with grace be abandoned, he named the subject to Sir William, in order that *he* might, if possible, point out the means by which an honourable retreat could be accomplished.

“I feel so indignant,” said he, after explaining the manner in which the mock marriage had been conducted, “at having, although unconsciously, been made a party to so disreputable a proceeding, that I declare to you I would almost as soon forfeit the money I have engaged to put down, than have any farther connection with the men.”

“Had you taken my advice,” said Sir William, “you would

not have entered into it at all ; but I don't see how you can call off now."

"Nor do I ; and yet one might imagine that conduct like that which I have described would form a sufficient pretext for withdrawing."

"Oh ! you must not think for a moment of making that a pretext. Were you to do so, you would only get laughed at."

"But do you not deem it disgraceful ?"

"Why, I must say that, strictly speaking, it isn't the thing ; but in the circle, my dear fellow, in which *they* move, an affair of the kind is really thought but little of. Had he married the girl in reality, the case would have been widely different—it would then have been considered disgraceful indeed ; but as it is, being merely a nominal marriage, which may at any moment be dissolved, why, his family are free from the stain of a low alliance, and his friends look upon him of course as before."

"Notwithstanding, he has utterly destroyed that poor girl by blasting her happiness for ever."

"The conduct of men of high connexions must not, my good fellow, be scrutinised too closely. You must consider the peculiarity of their position. Suppose, for instance, now, that this had been an absolute marriage, what must of necessity followed ? Why, his family, who would have considered themselves thereby eternally disgraced, would have cut him, of course, dead ; while his friends would have spurned him for being a fool."

"But this is no justification—"

"Justification ! I grant you. But a family of this description would rather there should be five hundred mock marriages than a real one with a creature of plebeian origin, unless, indeed, she possess a mine of wealth. The influence of affection or love in such a case is never allowed ; they'll not hear it. Rank or wealth, Thorn,—rank or wealth. No other influence can possibly be recognised by them. And perhaps it is as well that it is so. Conceive, for example, the absurdity of such an announcement as this :—"MARRIAGE IN HIGH LIFE.—We have authority to state, that the Earl of Clarendale will shortly lead to the hymeneal altar Miss Sophonisba Gills, the lovely daughter of the late Mr. Timothy Gills, for many years the confidential carman of the celebrated Jonas Carp, Esq., the *distingué* fishmonger of Billingsgate Market."—Why it would throw every member of the noble family into fits, while the bridegroom himself would become the legitimate laughing-stock of the world. And then look at the position of the girl. Would it not be one of perpetual misery ? Even suppose she

were received by the family in question, their very courtesy would make her wretched, if even their sarcasms failed to break her heart. The absurdity of persons wishing to form alliances in a sphere far above that in which they have been accustomed to move is really monstrous. As far as happiness is concerned, the ambition is fatal if the object be attained. They cannot be happy. Even their servants will sneer at the meanness of their birth. In a word, Thorn, the belief that anything but bitter mortification on either side can spring from a marriage of this character, is based upon ignorance the most gross."

"All this I admit to be correct," rejoined Stanley. "In an essentially artificial state of society it invariably is so; and none but densely ignorant persons would dream of forming such a connection. But that is not the point—"

"Why, it proves that this girl, for example, as far as regards her happiness, is not in a worse position than she would have been had the Earl really married her."

"But it does not prove the conduct of the Earl to be a whit the less disgraceful!"

"Granted!—as far as that goes; but it does not by any means follow, that because men of his caste delude a lot of ignorant girls, whom they consider fair game, they should therefore be incapable of acting in all other respects with strict honour. As I said before, Thorn, I regret that you ever entered this speculation; not because this affair has occurred, for that is too paltry to be considered for a moment, but because I conceive that the profits, whatever they may be, will never be commensurate with the trouble it may occasion. As, however, you are in it, I cannot see how you can well call off."

Nor could Stanley. The disgust with which the heartless proceeding had inspired him was not in the slightest degree diminished; his confidence in the honour of his new associates had not by the arguments of Sir William been to any extent increased; still, jealous of his reputation as a man of spirit, anxious to be deemed by all a high-toned fellow, and therefore dreading the possibility of being suspected of meanness, or even of irresolution, he determined at once to go on with the speculation precisely as if nothing of a disreputable character had occurred.

In pursuance of this determination, he in the course of the day called upon Captain Filcher, whom he found most appropriately engaged in the honourable occupation of fixing an entirely new roulette table, the secret springs of which had been constructed with surpassing ingenuity.

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed the gallant Captain, as Stan-

ley entered, "I am positively too glad to see you. I feared that something queer had occurred, you cut away so abruptly. You *should* have stopped. Oh! I'd have given the world if you had remained. We kept it up till daylight; and *such* sport! I thought I should have died. But how came you to leave us so early?"

"I was anxious to get away," replied Stanley, "and I always find that the safest course to adopt in such a case is that of leaving without giving even the slightest intimation."

"And so it is; but I am nevertheless sorry you started." Which was perfectly true. The sorrow expressed was entertained very sincerely, and moreover very affectionately, considering that he and a bosom friend had laid a well-conceived plan for fleecing Stanley to a highly respectable extent. "But I say, my dear fellow," he continued, "those bills, now—I haven't the cash for them yet. It seems strange, but the money-market is in such a state. I've been about them this morning. Four-and-twenty bills returned in three days!—*that* tells a little tale! However, I left them; but if you have any channel, I'll get them out of his hands."

"I can do nothing with them," replied Stanley.

"Oh! well, then, a day or two probably will be of no importance?"

"None whatever."

"I always like these things to be done at once; but to-morrow, or the next day, I shall be able, no doubt, to get a cheque for the amount."

"That will do quite as well," replied Stanley. "But when do we commence operations?"

"Why, I should say this day week. As far as the play is concerned, you see everything now is nearly ready; but there are rooms to be fitted up for the *Countess*."

"Will she reside here?"

"Oh! yes; and mamma is to be the comptroller of the household."

"Indeed! When do they return?"

"To-morrow, I hear; and some excellent sport we shall have. Did you ever see anything more admirably managed? Oh! the whole thing was capital!"

Stanley made no observation upon this, but directed his attention to the arrangement of the tables, more with view of changing the subject than of ascertaining what had been done. The Captain, however, entered into a variety of minute explanations having reference to the course they intended to pursue; and when he had explained all he wished him to know, Stanley left, with the understanding that he was to call the next morning for the cheque.

On the following day, he accordingly went ; but the Captain had been still unsuccessful. He was to have it the next day ; and he called the next day, and the next ; in short, he continued to call day after day, until the time had been fixed for putting down the first five hundred each, as per agreement, when he mortgaged his estate for the two thousand pounds, and regretted that he had not pursued this course at once, without exposing his poverty to the Captain.

Having effected this mortgage, he at once expressed his sorrow to that gallant person that he should have given him so much trouble, and stated, that as he had then sufficient money in his possession, he no longer required the bills to be done.

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Captain, on receiving this intelligence, "although I gave them this morning to a friend of mine, who promised to bring me the cash in the course of the day. But as it is, why, they had better be destroyed. I regret exceedingly that I should have been unable to get the thing done without delay ; but you know what bill discounters are."

"I've never had anything to do with them," said Stanley ; "but I believe they are not angels."

"Angels !—devils, sir—absolute devils. However, I'll get the bills together, and see that they are destroyed."

Stanley thanked him, and was satisfied. Scarcely knowing the nature of bills, it never struck him that he himself ought to see them destroyed ; and if it had, he possessed too much delicacy to hint that he deemed it essential. That, in his view, would have been a direct imputation upon the honour of the Captain, which he would not have cast, even if he had thought of the possibility of the bills getting into circulation ; but the fact is, as the Captain undertook to destroy them, he thought nothing more about the matter.

The time now arrived for making up the first bank to commence with, and they met at their own club, which they had named the European, and put down five hundred pounds each. The Earl and his friends, however, manifested no inconsiderable surprise at the unaccustomed promptitude of the Captain in this particular. They evidently anticipated nothing more substantial from him than an I. O. U., and, therefore, looked at each other with great significance when, on drawing forth his pocket-book, he put down ten fifties with the air of a man having the power to produce fifty more of the same sort at a moment's notice. It was held to be mysterious obviously by them all, although nothing was said on the subject at the time. The money was taken, the bank was formed, and the "European" opened the following night.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

IS ONE WHICH THE LADIES WILL APPRECIATE HIGHLY.

"Now, my precious," observed Mrs. Gills, addressing the "Countess," the morning after the speculation had commenced, "now your sperits is a little bit tranquil, you know, you must begin to look about you as a lady of title ought, and take care you're not imposed upon, or anything of that; because now you are a Countess, my dear, you must do, of course, as Countesses does, and keep up a proper sperit and dignity."

"Yes, ma," mildly replied the Countess.

"Nor you musn't be put off neither, my dear. You must have your own way, as all Countesses has. *Insist* upon having all you want, and you'll get it."

"But I have all I want, ma, already."

"Nonsense, child!—truly ridiculous! Oh! don't tell me! You ought to have a separate carriage, and a box at the opperer, and give a splendid serious of parties, and all that, and have all the new novels, and harps, and pianers—"

"But you know, ma, I never learned to play."

"What of that? The whole world needn't know it. When you give a soree, you know, or anything of that, engage them to play, my love, as gets their living by it. Countesses never plays in public. Don't you know, my dear, that that's beneath their dignity? Never try to play, and then nobody 'll know you can't. There's no occasion to tell the world what you don't know."

"No, ma, nor more their isn't."

"Very well, then, my dear, then you don't ought to do it."

"I won't, ma; I'll always make believe that I can play."

"In course. And mind, never suffer them stuck-up things of servants to address you as anything but 'my lady,' or 'your ladyship.' 'Did your ladyship please to ring for me, my lady?'—'May it please your ladyship,' and so on. I'm not sure it don't ought to be 'your grace'; but 'your ladyship' will do for the present. Be sure and make 'em stick to that; if they don't, ask 'em who they are speaking to with their impercence. Mind that particular. Always keep them gals at a respectable distance: they are sure to take liberties where they can. If you give 'em an inch, they'll take an ell, and you don't ought to do it. Always know what is due to your dignity, my precious, and make 'em conduct thei'selves in a way as becomes 'em. Look at that low vulgar feller, the porter. The ideor of bringing up the baker's bill in his naked hand, for all the world as if there want a piece of plate upon the

premises. And then look at that imperent thing, Susan. She's always a-giggling and going on. *I* see her, although she thinks *I* don't. What does she mean, *I* should like to know? Perhaps she thinks the situation ain't good enough for her. I'd give her a month's warning: she don't know her place. I don't think she's much better than she should be, my dear. Look at her curls! What business has a low common housemaid with all them there curls? Twelve pound a year, my love, won't support that. Besides she don't treat me with proper respect; and I'd have her to know, that although I'm not a Countess myself, I'm the mother of a Countess, and that, too, of as good a Countess as any in the kingdom. What does she mean by laughing, and sneering, and opening her ignorant eyes to the other servants, when I'm giving 'em the necessary orders? Does she think I'll put up with her low-bred ways? The insolence of such dressed-up things is exclusive. Either she or me must quit."

"Dear ma," observed the Countess, "don't drop yourself down to the level of her."

"*I* drop myself down to her level! No, my love; *I* think *I* do know myself better than that comes to. *Her* level! *I* don't think *I*'d go quite so low as that, neither!"

"Well, never mind, ma, I'll give her warning."

"In course. And very proper. *I* shall make a woman of spirit of you yet. But that, my darling, isn't all. You musn't let the noble Earl take no advantage of your innercence; for Earls is but men, and all men, in this regard, is alike; they'll all impose where they can; and you don't ought to suffer him to do it. Assume enough, my precious. Begin as you mean to go on. There's nothing like striking the iron while it's hot. It saves a world of trouble, my dear. If you wait till a man gets cool, you'll find him very difficult to bend to your own shape; but if you tell him at first what you mean, you 'stablish your dignity, and when he knows what he has to expect, why, he ain't after that disapp'inted. You take my advice, my love, and insist upon doing what you please; there's nothing like it. A woman ain't a woman of spirit as don't, and specially a Countess. You must go out a-patternizing people, particular them foreigners as sings; and give blankets away to the poor in cold weather: it all tells, my love, to make a noise in the world. And when you go a-shopping, make 'em bring the goods out to the carriage, instead of going in; and when you don't want your carriage, have a footman behind you with a long stick, with a large gold nob at the top. Nothing on earth, my dear, looks so respectable as that; and the taller the footman, and the longer the stick is, the better. Besides, you

parlour; and, after having explained most lucidly to the Countess how essential to the preservation of dignity it was to repudiate all low connections, descended from the drawing-room with all the severity of aspect and stateliness of deportment at her command.

On entering the room in which the venerable gentleman stood, marvelling greatly at the fact of his being shown into a parlour, Mrs. Gills reared her chin, and bowed with such surpassing grace, that in an instant he felt friendship freezing. He nevertheless approached, and was about to take her hand, which, however, she with a truly icy elegance waved towards a chair, and with an expression of sublimity desired him to be seated.

"Your manners is very cold, Mrs. Gills," observed the venerable gentleman, who could not but deem all this deeply mysterious. "Have I offended you in anythink?"

"Oh, dear me, no!" replied the lady, tossing her head with a most superb air.

"Oh! I thought p'raps I had," rejoined the venerable gentleman, "as you seems to be werry much changed. I shouldn't a-called, o'ny I appened to 'ear that Sophy was married."

"My daughter, sir, the Countess of Clarendale, is married," returned Mrs. Gills, with great dignity.

The venerable gentleman looked amazed. Could he believe it? Could he believe that the same individual Sophy, whom Mrs. Gills tried so extremely hard to plant upon him, was a Countess? He was about to take a comprehensive view of the matter, in order to ascertain whether he could really believe it or not; but Mrs. Gills interposed at the moment an observation which rendered his imaginative faculties subservient to the influence of straightforward facts.

"As circumstances is so much changed,"—this was the memorable observation,—"and as you must in course be aware that there's now a propriety as is proper to be observed, may I inquire your object in honnering us with this visit?"

"Oh! I on'y merely thought I'd look in to give Sophy—I mean the Countess—joy."

"Sir," said the lady, apparently quite shocked at the vulgar idea, "I'd have you understand that my son-in-law, the noble Earl, ain't a mechanic."

"I din't s'pose he vos. There's wery few noble Hurls as is. But can't I see the Countess? I should like to see her."

"Impossible. It ain't because I'm proud, no; but what would the noble Earl say? Why, he'd think it a disgrace to his 'scutcheon."

"It strikes me forcible," said the venerable gentleman, who felt rather piqued, "that half vot you know about 'scutcheons ain't much."

"Well, I'm sure ! I'd have you to know I don't tolerate no insolence, and so you needn't come it."

"Oh ! werry well, mum. But I must say, as a hold friend, I didn't expect to be treated in this 'ear upish vay."

"You may think yourself honnered that I saw you at all. I know I didn't ought to do it ; but I beg, sir, that in future we mayn't be troubled by your calling any more."

"Oh ! that you may take your hoath on. But as I remember there's a little trifle atween us of seventeen and sixpence, p'raps it von't be hinconvenient for you to settle without my summonsing on you to the court of requests?"

"What do you mean to insiniwate?" cried the lady,— "seventeen and sixpence, or seventeen hundred pound seventeen and sixpence ; it's all one to me ! I'll discharge the paltry sum, sir, immediate ! what do you mean?"

Mrs. Gills, being highly indignant, was about to bounce out of the room for her purse, when the folding-doors opened, and the Countess, who had been listening in the adjoining room, appeared.

"Dear ma !" she exclaimed, "here's a purse : but don't be angry with Mr. Joseph. You know he has always been kind to us, ma." And she extended her hand to the venerable gentleman, who was about to receive it with the utmost respect, when Mrs. Gills promptly interposed her person exclaiming,

"My precious ! What would the noble Earl say?—what would he think were he to see you shaking hands with a person in livery ? Fie ! my love, fie ! I'm putrified to think that you haven't more respect for your dignity."

"Well, ma, I'm sure there's no harm in shaking hands."

"There is harm, my love ! Gracious ! what would the world say ? What would be thought of you in high life ? Why, you wouldn't be received in good society ! Consider !"

"My lady," said the venerable gentleman,— "for though it seems werry rum, I am still glad to call you my lady—I vornt at all avare as you'd married a Hurl, or I shoodn't a-come ; no, I know my place better ; but I s'pose they vos havin' a game vi' me rayther ven they guv me your address, and said they thought I ought to call. Howsever, I'm glad to 'ear of your good fortun. and give you joy, and 'ope you'll always be appy ; but I must say your mother aint treated me vell ; cos under the circumstantialia, knowin' her so vell as I have done so long, and bein' always werry glad to do all I could to serve

her ven she vos but a servant like myself, I do think that if heven you d become the Queen of Hingland, she oughn't to be so stuck up."

During the delivery of this eloquent speech, Mrs. Gills, with excessive *hauteur* was counting out the seventeen and sixpence, and having done so, in due form tendered the amount. But the venerable gentleman disdained to receive it.

"I not touch it!" he exclaimed with magnanimity. "No; it ain't that as I care for; twenty times the sum don't make no hods to me!"

"But I insist!" cried the lady.

"So you may, mum: but I'd jist as soon touch a dose of pison."

"But you shall have it, sir!"

"Not a penny on it; no; I wish you a werry good day, mum. I don't," he continued, addressing the Countess, "mean any disrespect to your ladyship. I voodn't offend you for the world; but it's a hold sayin' an' a true un about the beggar on ossback." And hereupon, feeling much better in consequence of having made this observation, he quitted the house.

"The low-bred creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Gills as the venerable gentleman departed.

"But you shouldn't go on so, ma," said the Countess. "People don't like it."

"Of what importance is it to us, child, what *such* people like, or what they don't like? You must know what is due to your own dignity, my love, or you'll never be fit to be a countess. I declare I'm in such a flustration I don't know how to contain myself. Oh, I only wish for his sake I'd been a man."

Before the nerves of this amiable lady had become tranquil, Stanley having taken an impetuous sweep round the Park, returned with the full determination to enter the club, no matter who might be on the watch. Bob, however, allowed him to make a dead stop before he attempted again to alight, for he felt, and very naturally, that he had had enough running for one day at least.

"You look like a scavenger," said Stanley, as Bob approached Marmion's head. "Where did you pick up that mud?"

"A pelting arter you, sir, when you made believe to stop here afore," replied Bob.

Stanley smiled as he entered the house, and Bob thought that his reply was particularly pointed and severe, and he winked confidentially at Marmion on the door being closed, with the view of intimating to that sagacious animal that that

really was his unbiassed opinion. "It strikes me I shut up his shop, then," he observed. "There's nothing like getting the best of a master. Directly they find out they're wrong, they cut their sticks with their tails atween their legs, dead beat."

On entering the principal play-room, Stanley ascertained from one of the attendants that the bank had been on the previous night well nigh broken. He was also informed that the persons who had won, had signified their intention of playing that night, when, doubtless, the luck would be changed; and that it was deemed by the highest authorities politic to let a bank lose at first, in order not only to stimulate players, but to inspire due confidence by virtue of its stability being tested.

To this fellow's description of the extraordinary "run of luck" which had characterised the play, Stanley listened with the most marked attention. The prospect seemed cheerless. Two thousand five hundred pounds lost in one night. His high hopes were depressed. It was a "Bear" account with him: and yet, why should he despair? Had not the Earl himself told him, before they commenced, that they ought as a matter of course to lose at first? Why then should he feel disappointed? He tried to revive his hopes by looking upon their depression under the circumstances as the mere result of folly, and having learned that his partners in the speculation had appointed to meet at eight, for the purpose of replenishing the bank, he was about to take leave, when he was formerly summoned by the Countess and her mamma.

On entering the drawing-room, he was received with unusual parade. Mrs. Gills was particularly fussy, and hoped that he was well, and rang for the cake and wine, and most eloquently laboured to convey to him an idea of the delight she was sure she should derive from an early introduction to Mrs. Thorn. "Oh! do bring her with you, some day," she continued, "and let us have a quiet cup of tea. It will be so delightful, you can't think. I'm sure she's a dear nice lady; I am sure of it, judging from you."

Stanley smiled, and acknowledged the compliment profoundly, and said all that was necessary to convince Mrs. Gills that he thought her extremely polite.

"And now, Mr. Thorn, I've a secret," she continued,—"a secret which I don't want anybody to know on but you. I know I can trust you, and I'm sure you'll assist us. The fact is, my daughter, the Countess, and me, is a-thinking of getting up a party, for we finds it very lonely a-mumping here alone. Now in course you know all about the other nobility, the Dukes,

Lords, Viscounts, Ambassadors, and such like ; and, as we have never yet given a jollification, all we want is, for you just to put us in the way of it."

"I should think," returned Stanley, "that the Earl would be the more proper person to apply to."

"Oh ! but we want to do it unbeknown to him ! We want to surprise him ! to show him just what we *can* do. Oh, it will be so glorious ! You and Mrs. Thorn must come and meet all the nobility. Oh ! we shall have such a frolic !"

Stanley could not help laughing. He thought the conception excessively rich, and one which ought to be carried into immediate execution. Feeling, however, that he was not in a position to enter into the spirit of the thing himself, he advised them to apply to Captain Filcher, whom he described as being perfectly conversant with matters of that description, and who, he doubted not, would be but too happy to aid them.

"But does he know all about the invitation-cards, the etiquettes, and all that ?" inquired Mrs. Gills, anxiously.

"My firm impression is," replied Stanley, "that in a case of this peculiar character, you cannot have the aid of a more useful man."

"Oh, well, then, I'm sure I'll apply to him. I'm certain he won't refuse. But do you think he'll keep the thing a secret ?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," said Stanley. Nor had he. He believed him to be the very man to carry out the idea to perfection ; and, having explained to them how strongly he felt that the Captain would be delighted to serve them in such a merry cause, he received their warmest thanks and departed.

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## CHAPTER XL.

### IS ONE WHICH GENTLEMEN WILL NOT CONDEMN.

As the bank was impoverished every night, notwithstanding immense sums of money were lost by the majority of the players, Stanley soon began to view the speculation as a failure. He thought it strange, that with the chances in favour of the table, and with experienced men for managers, the bank should so constantly lose ; and that he did think it strange was not extraordinary, seeing that he was perfectly unconscious of the fact that the projectors of the scheme, through the instrumen-

talities of confederates, were realising fortunes. He knew nothing of the villanous system pursued: he had no idea of knaves being deputed nightly by the two persons with whom the speculation originated, to fleece the fair players, and to plunder the bank. He thought that, of course, all was square as far as they were concerned, and yet it struck him as being singular that their spirits should be raised after each night's loss. Instead, however, of thinking of confederacy, false dice, "despatching," and "securing," and thereby attributing all to the true cause, he imbibed the pernicious, soul-enslaving doctrine of Destiny, and madly ascribed all his losses to Fate.

This made him wretched, irascible, and occasionally, although perhaps involuntarily, brutal. He was satisfied with nothing: everything displeased him: trifles, at which before he would have smiled, now inspired him with rage; in his sleep he would constantly start and talk wildly, and when awake, he would fitfully pace the room, with pursed lips and overhanging brows.

This change poor Amelia perceived with alarm. To her gentle spirit it was a source of deep affliction: it filled her heart with sorrow, and her eyes with scalding tears. She wept bitterly, but in secret; before him she assumed a soft gaiety, and laboured to cheer him; and when she perceived upon his brow a more than usually dark cloud, she in silence caressed him the more.

Days of misery passed; and whenever he returned, she would watch his clouded countenance anxiously, in the fond hope of finding his spirit soothed, but in vain; still, fearing it might vex him, she never breathed a syllable having reference to his depression, until, finding her caresses repulsed as an annoyance, she became apprehensive that she herself might be, although unconsciously, the cause.

At first the bare thought of this being possible, dreadfully distressed her; but on reflection, being unable to recollect any single act of hers at all likely to have excited his displeasure, she began to hope that something she had either said or done, had been by him misconstrued, feeling convinced that if that were all, she should be able, by removing the misconception, to restore his tranquillity.

Having dwelt upon this for some time, to the exclusion of all other considerations, she resolved on alluding to the subject, and blamed herself for having permitted a mere misapprehension—for that she felt sure it was then—to continue in existence so long.

When this resolution was formed, Stanley was absent from home; he had left to meet his partners by appointment, with



the view of putting down the fourth and last five hundred each ; and as he had then made up his mind that the whole was irrevocably lost, he returned more sullen and peevish than ever.

As he entered, Amelia flew, as usual, to meet him, and when he had passively received her fond welcome, he sunk into a chair in the most listless style, and with a countenance enveloped in gloom.

"I have something, dear, to say to you," she observed, with a gaiety of expression which contrasted strongly with his dismal aspect,—*"something, my love, of importance. It is a question, and one which must be answered distinctly, too."*

"A question?" cried Stanley, peevishly. "Well, what is it?"

"Nay, do not be cross, dear Stanley. And yet, perhaps, I must allow you to be so until you have answered my question, and I have replied." She then threw her arms round his neck, and while gazing earnestly in his face, said, in tones of surpassing sweetness, *"Have I displeased you?"*

"Displeased me? Nonsense; no."

"Pray, Stanley, tell me. I fear that I have."

"I do tell you that you have not. Don't annoy me."

"Dear Stanley, do not be unkind! You have been for some time very sad, dear; my heart bleeds to see you. I cannot be happy if you are not so. Indeed, my dearest love, if I have in any way offended you—"

"I tell you again that you have not!"

"Then what is the cause of your sadness? Pray let me know all? I can bear it, my love; let it be what it may, I can bear it. Believe me, I can endure with more fortitude the knowledge of the very worst calamity that could befall us, than ignorance of the cause of that affliction, which is unhappily so apparent. Do, dear, pray tell me all. Do not keep me longer in suspense. You kindly, fondly let me share your joys,—am I not bound to share your sorrows? Believe me, dear Stanley, it will to me be an additional joy to know that your confidence in me is unbounded."

As a rebellious tear glistened in his eye, Stanley kissed her, and pressed her to his heart.

"Bless you!" she continued, as she wiped the tear away. "But I must not see that: anything but that I can bear. But you will tell me, dear, will you not?"

"My good girl, what have I to tell you?"

"Do not allow me to be tortured by conjectures. They afflict me, Stanley, far more than a knowledge of the real cause can, let it be what it may."

"Amelia, rest satisfied with this, that that which vexes me is not of any permanent importance."

"I thank Heaven for that! And yet if it be not, why do you allow it to torment you thus? Come, be cheerful, dear Stanley; it will be such a delight to me to see you smile again! But I cannot be content with this assurance. If I had," she continued archly, "sufficient influence over you, I would insist upon knowing more: but as I have not, I must, of course, in the tone of a suppliant, beg of you to tell me all about it. Come, dear, as a favour? I may be able to assist you. Besides, have I not a right to know? Upon my word, I am anything but sure that I have not. It strikes me that there should be no secrets between us. I may be wrong; but I incline, nevertheless, to the belief that a wife absolutely *ought* to know all that pertains to her husband."

"But even assuming that she ought, would it be wise, would it be kind on the part of a man to suffer his wife to be annoyed by the knowledge of every difficulty he has to encounter?"

"He frequently, I apprehend, annoys her far more by withholding that knowledge. When we see you depressed,—and that we can see, my love, in an instant, however much you may endeavour to conceal it,—the conjectures which arise, in most cases, create far more pain than would be induced by an actual knowledge of the facts. When you good creatures keep us thus in darkness, that we may not be afflicted by the troubles you endure, you little think that the kind, generous object you have in view is not thereby attained. We are troubled by seeing that you are troubled; the very fact of your spirits being depressed, depresses ours; and although we endeavour to cheer you when dull, the gaiety we assume is *but* assumed, dear Stanley, and the assumption of itself costs many a latent pang. But come, let me prevail upon you. What is the matter? It is true my reputation for ingenuity is not yet established, but a thousand things might be suggested even by me. Stanley, is there anything papa can do for you? If there be, let me know, there's a *dear*! Nothing could delight him more than to have it in his power to render you assistance. It would give him, believe me, the purest joy a man can experience. Tell me, dear—do pray tell me if he can in any way aid you. You know not how he would rejoice in the opportunity; indeed you do not; but be sure that he would serve you with all his soul. Let me name it to him, dear. What is it? *Do* tell me."

"Amelia," said Stanley, regarding her intently, "let us change the subject. Let it be sufficient for you to know, that

I have felt, perhaps, far more annoyed than I ought to have felt. The affair will soon be over, and you will then find me as cheerful as ever ; but if you do not wish to annoy me, and I cannot think you do, you will not in any way allude to it again."

Amelia's lips were thus sealed, and the subject therefore dropped.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE COUNTESS OF CLARENDALE'S SOIRÉE MUSICALE.

HAVING explained to Captain Filcher precisely what she wanted, Mrs. Gills had the heartfelt felicity to find that he was prepared to meet her views to a hair. He was in fact, as Stanley had intimated, the very man to carry her conception fully out. He was in raptures with it. Nothing could have delighted him more ; and so heartily did he enter into the spirit of the thing, and so promptly did he settle the preliminaries, feeling well convinced that before many days had expired the club would be completely broken up, and the glorious opportunity thereby lost, that he got cards engraved expressly for the occasion with the Earl's arms thereon emblazoned, and all his plans laid down to absolute perfection, in a space of time almost incredible in point of shortness.

It became, however, essential to the due execution of these plans that the Earl should be temporarily absent ; and it happened most conveniently that, having put down his share of the bank, which was doomed to be the last, and just as the Captain had arranged to get him down to Newmarket, he announced his intention of going to Brighton for a day or two, ostensibly in order to pay a long-promised visit.

For Brighton he therefore started, and no sooner had he left than the gallant Captain issued the cards. He sent them to all the Ministers, to all the peers and peeresses in town, to all the ambassadors, to all the members of the House of Commons without distinction, to all the Judges and chief members of the Bar and their ladies, to the principal literary men of the day, to the Lord Mayor and the whole Court of Aldermen ; in short, he proceeded in such an exemplary spirit, that no person of distinction in town could complain of being slighted.

It was to be a *soirée musicale* ; and as such was the case, he patronised the two most fashionable bands, and engaged not only the chief Italian singers, but all the native talent available. His views in that, as indeed in all other respects, were

extremely comprehensive ; in a word, he was firmly determined to do the whole thing on a scale of magnificence not to be surpassed.

"Now, my dear madam," said he, having settled this necessary part of the business to the entire satisfaction of Mrs. Gills, "pray what do you intend to give them?"

"Oh! they shall have such a capital hot supper," replied the lady, "and just as much wine, rum, brandy, and gin as they like to lay into. There shall be no stint of nothing. And then we'll have some punch; the punch alley Roman, I hear, is the nicest; they shall have some of that. And I'll tell you what jints I mean to have. First, for instance, there shall be a tremendous hiled round of beef at the top, and another airline at the bottom; a large plum-pudding in the middle, two saddles of mutton near that, a line of pork, a fillet of veal and ham, a turkey and saggages, lots of mince pies, a goose and apple sarce, carrots, turnips, taters, sparrowgrass, and every other delicacy in season; and if they can't manage to make a decent supper off that, why, it *will* be a strange thing to me."

"It will be strange," observed the Captain. "I should say that they have not had *such* a supper lately."

"Is there anything else besides that you think we ought to have! Because if there is, you know, Captain, we'll have it."

"No; I am really unable to suggest anything else. Your arrangements appear to be excellent. You must have enough porter."

"Oh! they shall have *lots* of that. But what time do you think they'll be here?"

"Why, I should say that they'll begin to arrive about nine."

"That will do nicely. Oh! won't the Earl be surprised! But you'll excuse me, I know, for I've got a world of business in hand; but if you should think of anything more in the mean time, please tell me."

The Captain promised faithfully to do so, and Mrs. Gills went about her business.

In less than an hour after that, however, certain of the noble Earl's family called, and on being informed that he was then out of town, the Marchioness, being resolved to have the matter explained, sent the card at once up to the Countess.

On receiving this card, the Countess almost fainted. "Oh, ma!" she cried tremulously, "I never can go down; I should drop."

"Rubbish, my precious!" exclaimed her mamma. "Why, what have you to fear? She won't eat you. Besides, you're every *bit* as good as her."

"Oh! I saw her get out of her carriage. The very look of her was enough. She's *such* a lady!—oh!"

"Well, my love, and ain't you a lady? And can't you get out of your carriage? I'll go down myself and see her."

"Do, ma, pray do."

"Oh! if she thinks to come any of her stuck-up fine ways over me, she'll find I can give her as good as she sends. I ain't to be frightend—don't think it."

Whereupon she adjusted her comprehensive cap, which was richly embellished with roses and lilies, and having completely satisfied herself that she *could* look fiercely if occasion should demand a look of fierceness, she tossed her head proudly, and descended.

"The Countess of Clarendale," observed the Marchioness, who was certainly a most majestic wonan, "is the lady whom I am anxious to see."

"The Countess," returned Mrs. Gills, who tried very laudably to look as tall as possible, "The Countess is rather poorly; but I am her mother!"

This announcement had the effect of almost stunning the Marchioness, who drew back a trifle, and looked at Mrs. Gills with the most intense earnestness, while two of her sons, by whom she was accompanied, seemed ready to burst into a roar, they enjoyed the thing so highly.

"It is really very strange," said the Marchioness, on recovering herself somewhat, "that I should not have even heard of my son's marriage until this morning."

"Well, it *is* odd he didn't let you know."

"At what church were they married?"

"Oh! it was done here by special licence!"

"Indeed! Can I not have the pleasure of seeing the Countess?"

"Oh, yes; I'll go and fetch her; but she's such a timid thing, you don't know."

"Well, this is a start!" exclaimed one of the sons, as Mrs. Gills quitted the room.

"*He's* not married!" cried the other. "He's not such a fool."

"I only hope to Heaven that he is not!" exclaimed the Marchioness. "But you hear what she says!"

"Oh, I don't care what *she* says. Depend upon it they are not married. But I long to see what sort of creature she is. If she be *anything* like her *mamma*, she's a beauty!"

While they were thus engaged Mrs. Gills was endeavouring to prevail upon her precious to "come down, and make no bones at all about the matter!" but the Countess was still extremely tremulous.

"Oh! ma," she cried, I'm fit to faint."

"The ideor!" exclaimed Mrs. Gills. "As if you expected she'd gobble you up. I never see such a thing. Pluck up your sperits, and bemean yourself like a Countess, as you are."

"Oh! but I feel so frightened, ma."

"What are you got to be frightened on? I'm shocked at you. Why ain't I frightened? A mere common paltry servant would have more sperit. You don't look as if you belonged to the nobility at all!"

"But I can't help it, ma."

"Exorbitant!—don't tell me? You should have a little more aristocracy about you! Come, come, my precious; come take them there knots out of your hankecher, and come down without any more affected ways."

"I can't, ma: no, indeed, I can't."

"You pervoke me! I shall never make anything on you. What is she any more than you are? She's only a lady of title like yourself! I never heered tell of such a thing! I'm ashamed of you, reely."

And having delivered herself to this effect, she again, with due boldness, descended alone.

"My daughter, the Countess, says as you must excuse her," she observed as she hastily re-entered the room. "She don't feel at all the thing this morning. At any other time you like to come, she'd be happy."

Well! The Marchioness *could* do no more. She could not insist upon seeing her, certainly, although she much wished to arrive at the truth, and therefore feeling it to be useless to press the point then, she rose, and without any unnecessary ceremony, left the house, intimating that she was not by any means satisfied, and that she felt herself bound to see into the matter further.

As the *soirée* had been fixed to come off on the morrow, the Captain wrote to the Earl by that night's post, to inform that his presence in town at a certain hour was indispensable; and as he made it appear that his special command had been prompted by something connected with the speculation, that noble person duly arrived, and found his partners pretending—in order that there might appear to be a sufficient excuse for the summons—to be deeply engaged in a discussion having reference to the propriety of continuing the scheme.

Into this debate the noble Earl entered with spirit, with the view of proving the advantages which would as a matter of necessity spring from the very fact of putting down ten thousand pounds more; and as it was then but eight o'clock, the

discussion was kept up with warmth until nine, at which hour the company began to arrive.

The professional people came first, and were received by the Countess and her mamma with unexampled condescension; but as the rattling of carriages continued, the Earl suddenly inquired if they knew what it meant?

"Oh! yes," replied the Captain. "The Countess gives a *soirée musicale*!"

"A *soirée devil*!" exclaimed the noble Earl; and starting up in a rage, he rushed from the room amidst loud peals of laughter.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded on reaching the brilliantly illumined *salon*, in which the Countess—and Mrs. Gills—dressed in all conceivable colours, and further embellished, in order to look sweetly pretty, with a greater variety of artificial flowers than ever adorned the active person of a sweep on Mayday—were entertaining the professional people with characteristic dignity and grace,—“what, I ask, is the meaning of it all?”

"My noble lord," replied the Countess. "We are only going to have a little party!"

"A little party! Are you mad?"

"But it's the Countess's own party:" interposed Mrs. Gills.

"I'll have no parties:" thundered forth the Earl. "Why did you not let me know of it, madam?"

"We thought it would be an agreeable surprise!"

"Tom!" cried the Earl, calling loudly to the porter. "Do you hear? Lock that door! Open it to no one. Not another soul shall enter to-night. What persons are these?" he added, turning to the Countess with a look which made her tremble.

"They are the singers, my lord."

"Dismiss them! I'll not have them here: they are not wanted."

Whereupon he returned to his associates, who were all extremely merry, and demanded of them why they had not informed him of the issue of the cards for this *soirée musicale*?

"We thought it by far too good a joke," was the reply.

"A joke!" exclaimed the Earl. "It *may* be a joke to you, gentlemen; but look at the position in which it places *me*! Tom," he added, calling again to the porter as the knocking at the door became tremendous. "Never mind their knocking! If you let another creature in, I'll strangle you. Are those people gone?"

"No, my lord."

"Turn them out! Why do they remain?"

The reason soon appeared. They had resolved not to leave

the house without being paid ; and no sooner was the Earl informed of this than he rushed fiercely up to them again, with a forcible ejectment in view.

"I'll hear nothing of your demands," said he, "to-night. I insist upon your leaving instantly. If you remain another moment you will draw upon yourselves consequences which may not be pleasing."

Several of the professional gentlemen here endeavoured to reason with him on the subject, but he would not hear a word, and exhibited such excessive violence that they eventually deemed it expedient to depart.

He saw them out while Tom kept on guard, and then closed the door upon them himself. But the knocking still continued, for the street was full of carriages, and the whole neighbourhood seemed to be in a state of commotion.

"Wrench off that knocker," he cried, "and then write upon the door."

"What, my lord?"

"Gone to the devil!—to let!—anything!—run away!—no matter what!"

Tom mixed up some whitening with great expedition, and while the enraged Earl himself kept guard, he wrenched off the knocker, and marked upon the door in legible characters, "TO LET. GONE AWAY."

"Now," said the Earl, "let them thunder if they can. Snap that bell-wire!—snap it at once! I charge you, Tom, not to let another soul in to-night." And having given this charge with violent emphasis, he quitted the house, leaving the Countess and her mamma sobbing over each other like children, while the Captain and his band were enjoying themselves highly, and making a *soirée musicale* of it, occasionally looking out upon the long line of carriages which continued to arrive and to depart with their loads until past one o'clock in the morning.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE COUNTESS OF CLARENDALE RECEIVES ANOTHER LESSON.

THE Earl did not return to the Countess that night: but on the following day about noon he went to the door of the "European," at which he thundered as well as he could,—the knocker being off, and the bell-wire broken—until he became so enraged, that he sent his stick clean through the drawing-room window.

The Countess and her mamma were in the drawing-room at



the time, and were dreadfully alarmed by the crash; but they knew the Earl's stick in an instant; and while Mrs. Gills rushed in a fright to the window, the Countess mechanically flew to the door.

"You have kept me here long enough, I hope," said the Earl, glancing fiercely at the Countess, as he passed her. "Are you deaf?"

The Countess, being too much alarmed then to speak, tremblingly followed her noble lord in silence.

"Well," said he, on entering the drawing-room, and throwing himself carelessly upon a couch, "a pretty mess you have got me into!—don't you think you have?"

"I'm sorry we've offended you, my lord," replied the Countess.

"For my part," observed her mamma, who had by this time recovered all her faculties, "I don't see much to be sorry about! Other Countesses has jollifications, and why shouldn't you?"

"Jollifications!" echoed the noble Earl, sarcastically. "I'll have no jollifications. Look at the position in which you have placed me by making fools of all those people."

"Well, you know, my lord, you know that was all your own fault, and nobody else's! Why disapp'int the company? Why didn't you let 'em come in? I am sure there was every-thing nice pervided. It warn't as though we'd only a leg of mutton and trimmings."

"Don't talk to me about legs of mutton and trimmings! Leave the room—both of you. I want to be here alone."

"Please don't be angry, my lord," said the Countess. "Indeed, we'll not do so again."

"No, I don't expect you will. I'll take care you do not."

"Upon my word and honour, my lord, I didn't know that we were doing any harm."

"Did I not tell you that I wished to be alone? Don't stand there chattering—be off!"

The Countess as she left the room wept; but her mamma, whose bosom swelled with indignation, looked at him, as she followed, with an expression of contempt the most supreme, and, in order to convey to him an additional idea of what she felt, she slammed the door after her as if she meant to split it.

"He's a brute!—an exorbitant monster!" she exclaimed, on entering the chamber to which the Countess had retired. "But it serves you justly right for not having more sperit. I don't know who you take after, that's the real truth. You don't take after me! Do you 'magine if he was a husband of mine I'd put up with it? No: I'd see him blessed first! I wouldn't take it from the best man that ever stepped in shoe-leather. I told you how it would be. I told you from the

first how he'd serve you, if you didn't stand up for your rights. I've no patience with you, I haven't. You pervoke me to such a degree, I don't know how to contain myself."

"What am I to do, ma?—what can I do?"

"What can you do? Why, up and tell him at once what you mean. Fly into a passion. The ideor! I only just wish he was a husband of mine, I'd let him know what's what, I'll warrant. Do you think that I'd fret, and stew, and go on so? No! nor you don't ought to do it."

"But how can I help it, ma?"

"How can you help it? Don't tell me! Presume a proper dignity and sperit. He'll tread upon you as if you was dirt, as they all will, if you let 'em; but you don't ought to suffer him to do it. And then the ideor!—did you ever in all your born days hear tell of such a thing as a husband being out all the whole blessed night, without even so much as mentioning on it! A pretty thing, indeed!—as if you had no right to know where he had been!—as if you didn't ought to insist upon knowing where he'd been! Do you think I'd let him have a minute's peace till he told me? How do you know where he was? And not a word of exclamation!—the ideor! But I see how it is: he don't think that we're good enough for him; but I'd have him to know that you're as good as him any hour in the day, if he comes to that. Aint you a Countess? and aint you consequentially bound to act as Countesses does? What does he mean? A very pretty thing! There! if I was you, I'll tell you what I'd go and do at once. I'd go to him, and I'd say, 'Now, I tell you what it is,—I'm not going to stand it, and so you needn't think it, and that's all about it. I'm 'solved to stand up for my dignity as a Countess; and if I can't live peaceable with you, I'll have a separate maintainance, and do what I like.' That's the way to bring him to his senses, my precious! Whenever a woman talks about a separate maintenance, a man thinks she's in earnest, and draws in his horns. It's the only way, to up and tell 'em what you mean at once. Now, you take my advice; you go down and look fierce, and tell him bold you won't have it."

"What, now, ma?"

"Yes, now. Make hay while the sun shines—strike while the iron is hot."

"I'm a good mind, but——"

"Do it! Men is cowards when a woman's blood's up. If you cringe to 'em, they trample upon you; but if you presume a proper dignity, they'll come down to *you*. Therefore do it, and make no bones about the matter."

"But I'm afeared, ma."

"Afeared! Don't tell me about being afeared. What have you to be afeared on? Give it him at once. Make believe to be in a tremendous passion. Speak *loud*, my precious: there's nothing like that: they're sure to get over them as doesn't speak loud. When you speak loud, men is quite safe to speak soft; in fact, they seems then to be almost afeared to speak at all. Throughout life, my love, there's nothing like giving it to 'em loud."

"But what am I to say, ma?" whined the Countess.

"What are you to say!" echoed her anxious mamma, in despair. "Why, aint I told you what to say? Give it to him well. Tell him you won't have it at no price, and so he needn't think it. As true as I'm alive, there aint a bit of the Countess in you."

"Well, ma, I can't help it."

"Can't help it! Rubbish! I've no patience with such ways. Don't tell me you can't help it!—it's enough to make one sick to see so much affectation. Go to him at once, and tell him flat that you're 'solved to stick up for your rights."

"Well, ma, I *will* go," said the Countess. "I'm determined I will. I'll tell him it's unbearable, I will; and he needn't think I'm going to put up with it."

"Do, my precious. Be a woman of spirit. It's the only way in the world to get over the men. And don't forget the separate maintainance."

"I won't, ma. I'll tell him plump; see if I don't."

"That's right, my darling, give it him home! And don't forget to give him an 'int about stopping out all the blessed night, neither. Hit him hard upon that p'int; and if you don't frighten him out of his wits, it'll be very strange to *me*. Therefore don't forget that."

"I won't ma. I'll tell him he treats me very cruel, and that I don't care a single bit about him."

"And very proper neither. I shall make a woman of dignity of you yet."

Thus encouraged, the Countess boldly descended; but on entering the drawing-room in which the Earl sat, she was seized with so violent a palpitation of the heart, that she was perfectly unable to give utterance to a word.

"Well!" said the Earl, frowning ferociously at her, "what do you want here?"

The Countess tried to say that she felt that she was treated very cruelly; but as she couldn't, she burst into tears and left the room.

"Why, what's the matter now?" cried her mamma, on her

return. "Has the monster been at it again? What does he say for himself?"

"He asked me what I wanted there," replied the Countess, sobbing bitterly—"what I wanted there!"

"Well, I never! And didn't you up and tell him?"

"I—couldn't—speak :—he looked—as if—he'd eat—me!"

"And what if he did? Why didn't you look as if you'd eat *him*, and then go ding dong at it with dignity? But I'll soon settle this—I'll soon let him know a piece of *my* mind, I'll warrant. He don't quite so easily get over me!"

"Oh! pray, ina, don't go: he looks, oh! *so* fierce!"

"Fierce!—the ideor! Do you think I'm afeared of a man? The ridiculousness of it pervokes me!"

Whereupon she bounced out of the chamber, and the next moment stood before the Earl.

"Now, I tell you what it is now, plump, my Lord," she observed, with a dignified air; "if this here's the way you're a-going to treat the Countess, my daughter, it won't do, my Lord, I can tell you: we aint a-going to stand it!"

"Am I to be under the necessity of turning you out of the house, Mrs. Gills?" said the Earl, with perfect calmness.

"Turn me out of the house? *Well*, I'm sure!"

"You will compel me to do so, if you do not conduct yourself with greater propriety."

"I'd have you to know that I'm not to be intimidated, my Lord. Where the Countess, my daughter is, there will I be."

"You had better be silent. I believe that I contracted no marriage with you."

"No; I only just wish that you had!"

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the Earl.

"You'd have had a very different person to deal with, I can tell you."

"I know it. I do not require to be told."

"I wouldn't have put up with one-twentieth part of the treatment that she has put up with, poor thing."

"It is of no importance to me, Mrs. Gills, what proportion you would have put up with."

"But *is* it proper treatment? Let me ask you that?"

"Will you do me the favour to leave the room, Mrs. Gills?"

"If she ain't treated better, she shall sue for a separate maintenance."

"Leave the room, madam!" cried the Earl, starting up, and pointing fiercely to the door. "If I hear another word, I'll have you instantly turned out of the house."

At this particular moment, it struck Mrs. Gills with great force, that, as she was not the absolute mistress of that house,

he had the power to carry his threat into execution; and as she felt it to be, therefore, inexpedient to provoke the tyrannical exercise of that power, she most reluctantly held her peace, and left the room, as she subsequently expressed it, "fit to bust."

"Well, ma," cried the Countess, who was naturally anxious to know the result, "how *did* you get on? What on earth *did* he say?"

"He's a brute! I'm putrified, my precious! I *never* in all my days heared of such a monster. Would you believe it?—why, he threatened to turn me out of the house, he did!—actually neck and crop out of the house!"

"Lor, ma! you don't say so!"

"It's a fact! But I'd have him to know that I'm as good as him, if he comes to that, and ain't a-going to tolerate such ways with impunity."

"But how did it come about, ma?"

"I'll tell you—but I feel so wild, I scarce know how to contain myself. 'Turn me out of the house, indeed!—a very fine ideor! 'In the first place,' says I, 'my Lord, this is all about it: the Countess, my daughter,' says I, 'ain't a-going to stand any more of your nonsense, and so,' says I, 'you needn't try it on.'"

"Lor, ma! reely you shouldn't have said that."

"Oh! there's nothing like giving 'em as good as they send. I aint lived all these years without knowing what I'm about. Howsever, says he, 'What do you mean?' says he. 'What do I *mean*?' says I, 'I'll tell you what I mean: I mean what I say,' says I, 'neither better nor worse.' 'Am I to kick you head first out of the house?' says he. 'Kick me out of the house!' says I, 'How many on you? I should only like to see you,' says I, 'a-kicking me out of the house. I'd cure you of kicking for the rest of your days,' says I."

"Lor! you didn't ought to have gone on so."

"Oh! don't tell me. It showed him, at any rate, I wasn't afeared. 'Kick me out,' says I, 'will you? You're a nice man, I don't think, to talk about kicking.' 'I'll do it,' says he, 'if you don't hold your noise.' 'You will,' says I, 'will you? Do it—at your perel!' 'I didn't marry you,' says he. 'No,' says I, 'I only just wish,' says I, 'for your sake, you had. I'll warrant,' says I, 'I'd let you a-knowed the difference!' So with that we went right at it, hammer and tongs. But I soon cowed him down—I soon gave him to know that I warn't to be frightened."

"Oh dear! I'm very sorry you said anything to him."

"Oh! rubbish about being sorry. There's nothing like telling 'em plump what you mean. Is he to treat you in this

here scandalous way without having a syllable said to him? His lawful wife too, and a Countess! You ought to go in. I don't ought to do it. You ought to up and tell him right flat you won't have it, and let him talk about turning you out, if he dare. A pretty thing, indeed! Why, what did you marry him for?"

"I wish I never married him at all, ma, that I do. I'm very unhappy."

"And likely to remain unhappy, too, unless you show a proper sperit. Do you think, if I was a Countess, I wouldn't act different? I'd give him to know I'd do just what I liked, and give just what jollifications I liked. Does he imagine that you're to be moped up here without displaying no dignity? Does he suppose that you're to have no company, no parties, no frolics? Why, had you married a common tradesman, you'd been better off. Stick up for your rights, my precious, and don't be imposed upon by nobody. That's the only way. It's out of all character that you should be muddled up here, and have no sort of pleasure, no sort of society, nor nothing of that. It's enough to drive any woman stark staring mad! What's the good of being a Countess, if you don't do as countesses does? What's the good of having a title, if you don't keep up your dignity? That's my sentiments. It astonishes my intellects to see you submit to be treated like the common scum of the earth. It's incredulous to me that you should suffer yourself to be put upon like that. Why, if I was you, I'd turn the house out of the windows. I'd see who was misses, I'll warrant. And depend upon it, that's the only way. You haven't half enough of sperit, you don't ought to let him keep you thus under his thumb. If you do it now, what'll it be hy and by? That's the point: that's what you ought to consider. I never in all my days heared of such a thing as a Countess being treated like you. Where's your pride? You don't seem to have got a mite in you. I don't understand it. It gets over me altogether. I've no patience with you: I haven't, as true as I'm alive!"

While the Countess was being thus lectured by her mamma, who was earnestly anxious to inspire her soul with due dignity, the Earl and Captain Filcher—of whose arrival the ladies knew nothing—were dividing the profits of their late speculation, and arranging the preliminaries of a certain transfer, the character of which will be duly explained anon.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

## STANLEY'S PECUNIARY EMBARRASMENTS COMMENCE.

THE two thousand pounds for which Stanley had mortgaged his estate being lost, his actual income was reduced to something less than two hundred a-year ; and as he continued to live at the rate of a thousand, he soon of course found himself embarrassed.

Still the tradesmen whom he patronised did not for some time annoy him : they believed him to be rich, and were therefore with infinite pleasure prepared to give him credit to any amount, notwithstanding their regular bills were unpaid.

This did not, however, last long. In less than two months they began to be importunate. *One* had a very heavy bill to take up on a certain day ; another happened at the time to be dreadfully pressed ; a third remembered by a miracle that his commodities bore only a ready-money profit ; a fourth became suddenly so circumstanced, that he every day expected a man to be put in possession ; while a fifth had decidedly a couple of executions in his house at that particular crisis ; and thus they went on, inventing fresh falsehoods daily, and making it appear that they were then in such terrible trouble, that their commercial salvation depended upon Stanley, inasmuch as that, unless these identical " little bills " were immediately settled, the Gazette would be the inevitable portion of them all.

To Stanley these annoyances were galling in the extreme. He felt deeply humiliated. His inability to pay sums so paltry mortified him more than if the total had been twenty times doubled in one amount. The thing was altogether new to him. He knew not how to act. Had he been, as many thousands are, accustomed to these petty perplexities, the necessity for either bearing up against them, or exerting himself with the view of getting rid of them at once, would have appeared to be absolute ; but as he had never been in any way pressed before, his spirit seemed broken, and he became irresolute and inactive.

Poor Amelia—from whom the widow's embarrassments had been so effectually concealed, that she knew only that the carriage had been dispensed with—could not understand this altered state of things at all. At that period she had had no money from Stanley for a month ; but having taken care of a small sum she possessed at the time of her marriage, she had been able to pay for those articles for which immediate payment was required, while perceiving how much the importunities of those

tradesmen who had given them credit annoyed him, she endeavoured, as much as possible, to withhold from him all knowledge of the abrupt and threatening manner in which they made their demands. When, however, the whole of her money had been expended, and the creditors, who had previously displayed the most cringing servility, had become not only clamorous but insolent, she felt it to be her duty to mention the subject to him that she might know the real cause of their not being paid.

"Stanley," she observed, taking advantage of a moment in which he appeared to be somewhat more tranquil than usual, "those persons are beginning to get *very* impatient."

"What persons?" demanded Stanley.

"Those tradesmen, dear, who have sent in their bills. They called again this morning."

"Let them call. They must wait."

"But they say that they will *not* wait, my love!"

"But I say they *must*! What do they mean? Are they afraid of losing their money?"

"Why, it would seem that they were, for the tone they have assumed of late is really very harsh and insulting."

"Insulting!" echoed Stanley. "I'll kick them to the devil!"

"Do not be rash, dear Stanley. They are, perhaps, very poor. But why do you not pay them at once?"

"They shall wait now for their insolence."

"But were it not better, dear, to settle their accounts, and then to show them that you are displeased with their want of confidence in you by dealing with them no more?"

"I shall do so when I find it quite convenient; but certainly not until then."

"But the fact of its being at present inconvenient is a matter of the slightest possible importance! I can easily get sufficient money to pay them!"

"Of whom?"

"Oh! I can get it of mamma!"

"Have you ever," demanded Stanley regarding her with sternness,—"have you ever named the subject to *her*?"

"Never, Stanley! No dear, never!" replied Amelia; "I would not do so for the world, my love, without your permission."

"Very well. In that quarter never let it be named."

"But what possible objection can you have, dear? I really can see none myself."

"I have an objection—a very great objection; one which is perfectly insurmountable."



"Of course, my love, you are the best judge; but do you know, my impression is, that you are far too delicate, Stanley!"

"I would not have it known that I am short down at Richmond, for ten thousand pounds!"

"Oh! you proud creature!" exclaimed Amelia, with a smile. "And yet are you proud, Stanley? Let me bring you to the test, that we may see if that really be pride which looks so very much like it. Stanley!" she continued, with much earnestness, "the servants—our servants! It cannot be kept from them."

"I'll discharge the first that dares to hold the slightest communication with these people."

"It cannot be prevented, my love. They will talk: they will canvass matters of this description; they will form their own conjectures; they will swell the lightest word into an affair of vast importance. Believe me, I tremble whenever I hear a single knock at the door,—I do indeed, my dear, and would answer all such knocks myself, were it not for very shame."

"I wish to heaven you would not trouble yourself about such things at all."

"I cannot help it: indeed I cannot help it. Did you but know what I suffer, when I hear those persons in the hall asking the servants the most impertinent questions, and leaving messages of the most insolent and menacing character, you would pity me."

"Why did you not tell me of all this before?"

"Because I well knew, my love, that it would vex you; and as I fully expected that you would very soon be able to meet their demands, I have concealed it from you, hoping that the annoyance would cease without causing you any additional mortification. But, be assured, dear Stanley, that I do not speak thus for myself. Although it affects me deeply to hear you spoken of by those persons in terms so unwarrantable and harsh, I am not anxious for the immediate discharge of these debts merely as a matter of comfort as far as I am concerned; my chief object in bringing the subject forward, is to put it to you whether it would not be in every point of view far better to allow me to get—say to borrow—a certain sum of money of mamma, than to promote the circulation of those rumours which absolutely strike at the purity of your motives?"

"Oh, let them circulate what rumours they please! they cannot injure me."

"But, Stanley dear, would it not be better to allow me to do at once that which I propose, than to suffer your importance to be diminished, not only in the estimation of those tradesmen,

but also in the eyes of our servants? Consider, my love. What if mamma should know that you are at present somewhat pressed? Nay, if even my father were informed of the fact, of what possible consequence could it be? But he need not know anything about it."

"It shall not be known to either."

"Well, then," continued Amelia, "let me suggest another course. But you will not be angry with me? Promise that you will not be angry if I offer another suggestion?"

"Well, I do promise: what is it?"

"Have you not heard, dear, of persons—persons, too, moving in high society, who, whenever they need temporary loans, can obtain them by depositing articles of value as security for repayment?"

"I have," replied Stanley.

"Well, dear, then why cannot we do the same? Those jewels of mine (you know I very seldom wear them); I have no idea how much they cost, but I should say they are worth five times the sum we require to pay all these tiresome people. Why not deposit *them*!"

"You are a good girl," said Stanley: "but there will be no necessity for anything of the kind."

"Take them, dear Stanley!" continued Amelia. "Do let me prevail upon you to take them; or tell me where to go, and I will take them myself. I should not be ashamed, dear; indeed I should not be ashamed!" But as she spoke, the tears trickled down her beautiful cheeks; which, however, she tried to conceal.

"Oh, that will not be required," replied Stanley.

"But Lady Dashwell *always* went herself. She took hers to a goldsmith in Oxford Street, I have heard. Come, dear, let me take mine, and then all these annoyances will be at an end."

"Why, Amelia, I am not a beggar! I'll go and get the money of my mother at once. I *can* do so; but the necessity for it never before appeared to be so pressing."

"Then you forgive me, dear Stanley?"

"*Forgive* you!"

He embraced her, and left her comparatively happy. She did not expect that he would have been so calm, although it was manifest, even to her, that his naturally impetuous spirit was being by some process gradually subdued.

On reaching the widow's residence, Stanley found her sitting in solitude at the drawing-room window, envying the owner of every carriage that passed, and conceiving it to be by far the greatest luxury under heaven. She had no carriage; and the thought of this formed her chief affliction. She felt that she

could with fortitude have endured the loss of anything but that; which was certainly nothing but natural, seeing that the things which we have *will* appear very poor when compared with the things we have not.

"Mother," said Stanley as he took a seat beside her, "have you any money at your banker's?"

This question amazed the widow much. The tone was so excessively novel. It had theretofore been invariably, "Mother! I *want* some money, and *must* have it; and if you haven't got it, you must *get* it!" Her amazement may hence be understood.

"Why, my love," she replied, on recovering herself somewhat, "I have a little."

"I wish you'd would lend me some for a short time," said Stanley. "You shall have it again."

"Certainly, my dear. How much do you want?"

"How much can you spare?"

"Why, I scarcely know, my love. Will twenty or thirty pounds be enough?"

"I wish you could let me have a hundred."

"A hundred pounds, my dear, is a large sum to me now!"

"I know it, mother: I know it. You need not remind me of that. The question is, *can* you let me have it? I am pestered to death by a parcel of petty people, whom I am anxious to pay."

"Well—well, you shall have it. But be cautious, my Stanley, —for Heaven's sake be cautious, there's a dear! I dare say, my love, that you do the best you can; and I know it to be very distressing to retrench; but the necessity for living within your income, limited as it is, dear, must not be overlooked."

"I know, mother—I know all about it. Just give me a cheque."

"I have been thinking, dear," continued the widow, as she very slowly opened her desk, "I have been thinking—and it's strange that it never struck me till this morning—that if we were to live together, dear, in one house, you know, so that we should have to support but one establishment, we should be able to live in better style, besides being——"

"Yes—yes," interposed Stanley, with impatience. "We'll talk about that another time. I'll see about it. Let me have the cheque."

The cheque was accordingly drawn, and when he had taken leave hastily, although with somewhat more affection than usual, he proceeded to the banker's without delay.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

IN WHICH THE VENERABLE GENTLEMAN APPEARS JUST ON THE VERGE.

As Amelia had conjectured, the constant applications of the tradesmen for the settlement of their accounts formed the principal topic of conversation among the servants. They felt perfectly sure that the establishment was about to be broken up; and as the gentle Joanna conceived it to be her duty to relate all the particulars to her venerable friend, the day was named for the consummation of their bliss exactly three hours after Stanley had made the heart of poor Amelia glad by placing the entire hundred pounds in her hand to be appropriated to the purposes for which it was obtained.

It may also be stated as a remarkable coincidence, that Bob—whose spirits were governed by Amelia as absolutely as the thermometer is governed by the air, was on that very evening unusually gay. He had been to the banker's with his master; he had seen his mistress on his return; he had seen her twice, and well knew, by the joyful expression of her countenance, that a favourable change had taken place.

When, therefore, he entered the kitchen in which the blooming Joanna and her venerable friend were sitting *tête-à-tête* with very great affection, he exclaimed in the joy of his heart, "Now I don't care a dump! It's all right! I know it is by missis! Blest if I mind standing a couple of pots of arf-and-arf!"

"Vot! 'ave you got yer vages?" inquired the venerable gentleman.

"No; but I shall get 'em, safe. But that ain't what I look at. I warn't even thinking of them. I know it's all right now with master; that's all I care for. I know it by missis's looks. I'll bet ten to one on it, brandies and waters. She can't deceive me."

"Looks is werry deceptive," observed the venerable gentleman. "It's a werry old sayin', and a true un, that you mustn't take people by their looks."

"Oh, but missis is one which can't be mistaken. Let me look in her face, and I know what's o'clock. I can tell in an instant. There ain't a ha'p'orth of any mistake about *her*."

"But ain't you got nothink else in this case to go by?"

"Yes; but that, and nothing else, would be plenty for me. But there is something else. We went out about four o'clock all in a hurry, and drove to old missis's house. Well, master

went in with his tail very low—I never see a man much more downer in the mouth; but he hadn't been there long before he came out, and pelted right down to the banker's. Well, I knew there was something rayther extra in the wind, so I watched him; and when he came out, *p'r'aps* he warn't a little altered! I never see such a change in a man in my life! Well, he got in, and cut back; and when he pulled up at the door missis was on the *quivy*, as the French says, at the window; and the minit she see him I knew how it was. I could tell, I'd oath it. And when I went up just now, the whole thing was as clear to me as chrystal."

"Well, I only hope your words may come true," said Joanna.

"I'm right for a million. I'll lay any odds. It's the Monument to a molehill."

"I knowed a young ooman," observed the venerable gentleman, assuming that profoundly philosophical expression which he invariably wore when about to illustrate any particular point by analogy,—“I knowed a young ooman—and a werry nice young ooman she vos—vich vos in a decline. Werry well. For a matter of more than three 'ear she vos a-goin', and a-goin', and a-goin' gradual; but she never for all that believed she vos a-goin', although she vos terrible thin, and looked as pale as any sheet of vite paper. She voodn't believe it, cos she always had a appetite, and vood always be a-eatin' from mornin' till night in the most onsatisfyin' manner you ever 'eared tell on. Werry well. Now, ven her flesh vos vasted nigh hall off her bones, and she looked like a skeleton kivered vith kid, and hevery soul as looked at her thought that go she *must*, she all at vunce had the most beautifullest colour as ever vos seen upon a peach! She looked like a angel as she sit all in vite; and as her little tiny fingers vos a-playin' vith her curls, she vos a-smilin' as sweetly as if her little sisters in heaven vos a-visperin' to her softly, 'Hope—still hope!' And I remember," continued the venerable gentleman, as he wiped away a tear, which the vivid recollection of this scene had called forth,—“I remember one sanguine friend vich loved her, exclaiming ven he seed this 'ere colour in her cheeks, '*Now* she's all right! 'vot a favourable change! Blessed be God, she'll get over it now!' But vot vos it? Natur' blushing to part so pure a soul from a body so fair: nothing else. In an hour after that exclamation vos uttered, she died. Werry well. Now this seems to me to be a case werry similar: the pockets of your master is got the same complaint; havin' overrun the constable, his means has been long in a decline; and although he may jist now be suddenly flush and you may, in consequence, vishin' him vell, feel your-

self justifiable in offerin' to bet any hods it's all right, it strikes me forcible that this here flush is on'y a sign that the whole 'establishment's jist on the p'int of goin' to pot. That's my sentiments. I hope I may be wrong; but that's jist vot strikes me. I shall be werry sorry, mind yer, to 'ear it, cos I do think your master's a trump; vile your missis, accordin' to all accounts, is a werry good sort."

"She *is* a *regular* good 'un!" cried Bob. "A out-and-outer! I never see her feller yet; and nothing would hurt my sentiments so much as to see your blessed words come true; for I'm sure that if anything rotten was to go for to occur, she'd break her heart."

"Well, I hope I may be wrong. But I 'spose you know Joanna's a-goin' to give vornin'?"

"Well, she may if she likes, in course; but I won't: I'd stop with 'em if it wos on'y for my vittles."

"She is not," rejoined the venerable gentleman, "a-goin' to give vornin' cos she don't git her vages, but in consequence of other circumstantials!"

"Oh, that there's the day of the month, is it?" cried Bob, who saw Joanna blush at the moment, and look very archly, while the venerable gentleman chuckled, and drove his fingers into Bob's ribs, and rubbed his hands with great glee. "I see! Well, I wish you ijoy with all my heart. In course I stand godfather to the first?"

"Robert!" cried Joanna, with a most roguish look. "Lor! how *can* you go on so?"

"Oh! but I expect it; and if it's a heir, I'll make him a present of a hat to begin life with. But when is it to be?"

"Vy, as a mutual friend to both," replied the venerable gentleman, "ve don't mind telling of you, cos ve vant you to give away the bride—hif you'll do us the honner?"

"In course! Oh, yes! You do me proud. Well?"

"Well, then, Joanna gives vornin' to-morrow; ve shall be arkst for the fust time in church next Sunday; and as she vill leave on the ninth of next month, the job's to be jobbed on the tenth."

"Bravo!" cried Bob. "The time's drawin' very near! How do you mean to pass the day?"

"Vy, ve don't think it's vuth vile to make much fuss: ve think that that, under all circumstantials, may be dispensed vith; but ve mean to enjoy ourselves, you know. Ve mean to be jolly. No expense shall be spared. Ve'll 'ave every-think comfortable and reg'lar."

"Well, all I can say is, I hope you'll be happy."

"Safe!" replied the venerable gentleman with much ardour;

when, turning to his betrothed, he added, "Can there be hany doubt *about* it?"

"Not the least, dear," replied Joanna, with a most winning smile. "I am sure we shall be happy."

"I should think so!" cried the venerable gentleman. "Vot is there to perwent it? I don't mean to say I'm so young as I vos p'raps twenty 'ear ago, but vot o'that? The constitution's the p'int! If that's sound and reg'lar, vy vot's the hods!"

"But you don't look old in my eye, by no means," observed the affectionate Joanna.

"Don't I?" returned the venerable gentleman, with one of his most fascinating smiles. "You're a rogue!—I know you're a rogue, and there's no mistake of any sort about you. However," he added, "looks isn't the pint: the great and grand thing is, the glorious constitution; and, as mine's as sound as a apple, it makes no hods about the hage."

Joanna agreed with him perfectly of course; and, as he shortly after this took leave of his beloved, Bob accompanied him to the nearest public-house, with the view of talking matters over in private.

Here Stanley's affairs were again freely canvassed; but, although Bob endeavoured to make things appear as bright as possible, his venerable friend adhered still to the opinion he had expressed—an opinion, the perfect correctness of which was on the following morning, by an act of consummate villany, proved.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE BILLS OF EXCHANGE.

WHILE Amelia was occupied in settling the accounts of those tradesmen who had been so importunate, Stanley received two letters, of which the contents were to the effect that two bills drawn by him, and accepted by Filcher, each for five hundred pounds, due the previous day, had been dishonoured, and that unless the amounts were immediately paid, proceedings would be forthwith commenced.

On receiving these letters, which were brought by the same post, Stanley's blood became hot; and having resolved to demand an explanation of Filcher, who had promised to destroy these bills, he ordered his cab to be brought to the door with all possible despatch.

Before, however, this could be accomplished, a banker's clerk called, and on producing a pocket-book to which a chain was attached for security, presented another five hundred

pound bill—one of Stanley's own acceptances—for payment, which was certainly unfortunate; that is to say, an unfortunate time for such a bill to be presented, albeit the circumstance of bills being brought at the very time they are not wanted, is one which will, in all probability, excite in the minds of men less and less surprise as they gradually approach the perfection of civilization.

But, although it was in one point of view an unfortunate time for this bill to be presented, in another it was fortunate, inasmuch as Amelia was from home, while the clerk was one of those extremely pleasant persons who deem it correct to fright one's house from its propriety by explaining the nature of such business at the door. In this particular case it was stated with great minuteness to the servant, who, as in duty bound, delivered the message to his master as correctly as he could.

"Gentleman," said he, "called—five hundred pound, sir—bill, sir."

"What!" exclaimed Stanley.

"Gentleman, sir—five hundred pound——"

"Show him up."

The clerk—who evidently prided himself upon his picturesque personal appearance, having rings on his fingers and pins in his stock, while a dazzling watch-guard was laced over his waistcoat with surpassing ingenuity—was accordingly introduced.

"Now, sir; what is the meaning of this?" cried Stanley, darting a look of fury at him. "Come, sir, explain!"

This rather astonished the faculties of the clerk, for he really had nothing to explain, and he said so: he had merely to present a bill for payment, and that was all he either knew or cared about the matter.

"Let me tell you," said Stanley, who being unacquainted with the straightforward functions of his visitor, viewed him as one of the Captain's swindling confederates; "let me tell you that this a most villanous transaction!"

"It may be," said the clerk. "I know nothing of it."

"Don't tell me, sir, you know nothing of it! Where did you come from? Who sent you?"

"I came in the regular course of business!"

"Who sent you?—but why do I ask? You may tell Captain Filcher from me—but I'll tell him myself."

"Then I'd better leave a notice?"

"I'll have *nothing* left! Quit the house!—*instantly*, or I'll kick you to the devil."

The clerk would have smiled, but as the fierce look and vio-



lent action of Stanley inspired him at once with an idea that at that particular moment it would be hardly safe to smile, he withdrew with a deep sense of the indignity he had suffered, and left the notice with the servant below.

The cab was now announced, and Stanley, trembling with passion, descended ; but he had no sooner got to the door than another banker's clerk came with another bill for five hundred pounds, which so enraged him, that holding him as he did to be another confederate, he knocked him down violently, stepped into the cab, and drove off without uttering a word.

"Well !" said Bob privately as he mounted behind, "that's the tidiest done thing I ever *did* see ! I wonder what's the state of the blessed stocks now ? Something smokes—safe ! I wouldn't have had that there straitforrard hit at a gift : that's my candid opinion."

"Stop him ! stop him !" shouted the clerk, on recovering in some slight degree those senses of which he had been for a moment deprived ; "stop *him* ! stop the cab, there : police ! police !"

Stanley heeded him not ; he in fact scarcely heard him : certainly the impetuosity with which he drove was not ascribable to any apprehension on his part of being overtaken. But the clerk thought otherwise ; his firm conviction was, that his assailant was dreadfully alarmed ; he therefore put on the steam, and ran with wonderful velocity ; and it is really amazing how fast men will run when they believe that they are feared by those whom they pursue.

"It's of no use, my leetle swell," said Bob with great caution, as he turned to view the strenuous physical efforts of the clerk,—"*it ain't a ha'porth of use ; and it's well for you it ain't ; for if you wos to come up with us now, I'd take your odds that when you shaved yourself in the morning you wouldn't know your own mug. I don't pertend to understand the merits of the case ; but masters ain't very particular ; you'd on'y get victimized more ; so you'd better give it up, because, try all you *know*, you wouldn't catch us in a fort-night !*"

And this, after a hard run of five hundred yards, seemed to be the opinion of the clerk, for, having exerted himself to that extent with the most exemplary spirit, he pulled up to pant, and then returned to the house, with his noble bosom swelling with vengeance. *He'd* teach him the difference : *He'd* let him see : *He'd* make him pay dearly : *He'd* serve him out sweetly when he caught him. In short he didn't exactly know what he wouldn't do, and that was a positive fact.

Stanley, who had continued to drive at a slapping pace, soon arrived at the door of the European, when Bob, who considered it expedient to look out with unexampled sharpness, flew to the head of the horse like a fairy.

The door of the European was open, but nearly the whole of the windows were closed; and as Stanley alighted, the porter, who had been packing up a box in the hall, and who was then the only person in the house, bowed respectfully, but with an expression which seemed to indicate that nothing was to be got out of *him*. And this proved to be the case: he knew nothing. He believed; but couldn't tell. He thought, but didn't know. It was possible that the Captain was living somewhere, but he couldn't tell where; nor could he tell whether the Earl was or was not in town: he might be, or he might not; perhaps he was, but he couldn't say.

The manifestly gross equivocation of this fellow tended to confirm Stanley's fears, and having left him with the conviction that he had been instructed to know nothing, he called upon all whom he knew to have been the associates of Filcher, including Sir William and the Earl; but as from them he was unable to obtain the slightest information having reference to the scoundrel's retreat, he returned home in a state of mind bordering upon madness.

Amelia—who, as she fondly conceived, had been removing every cause of annoyance by paying the bills of her tradesmen, the whole of whom had not only expressed their sorrow at having been compelled to be so pressing, but had earnestly solicited a continuance of that patronage, which they, of course, declared it would be their study to deserve—received him on his return with a smile of joy. She had heard nothing of the presentation of the bills; nor had she—by a miracle—heard a word about the assault which during her absence had been committed at the door: her happiness was therefore undisturbed until she perceived that Stanley, on receiving her embrace, looked haggard and wild, when the delight she had experienced instantly vanished, and her mind again teemed with the most painful apprehensions.

"Dear Stanley, are you not well?" she inquired with an expression of fond affection, mingled with sadness.

"I am not," replied Stanley, in tones which seemed to indicate a broken spirit. "I am not. It will soon pass off."

"I am very sorry that you are not well, dear. What is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing. I shall soon recover. Leave me—leave me."

"Will you not——"

"Leave me!" cried Stanley, in a furious tone. "Why do you delight in tormenting me thus?"

Amelia looked at him steadfastly for an instant, and then burst into tears; which Stanley no sooner perceived than he embraced and kissed her fondly.

"Forgive me," said he; "I did not mean to speak harshly. You are a dear, good girl. Believe me, I would not afflict you, Amelia, for the world. But I have been much annoyed, my love—very much annoyed. I know that it was cruel to speak to you thus; but indeed I scarcely knew what I said."

Far less than this would have been sufficient for Amelia, who instantly tried to look joyous and gay.

"I know, my dear Stanley," she observed, "that you never intend to speak unkindly to me; of that I am perfectly sure, and I am therefore a weak simple creature to attach so much importance to an unkind word; but, my Stanley, I have been so accustomed to associate you with all that is generous, forgiving, and kind, that the slightest reproof from you pierces my heart. Bless you!" she added, kissing him passionately, "you are a dear good soul. I'll not stay another moment to tease you; but do look on the bright side, dear Stanley! hope—still hope for the best. You do not know, dear, how happy I am when you are cheerful. Pray—pray do not be dull!"

"I will not," replied Stanley, as he led her to the door. "I'll endeavour, at least, to be calm." And when he had once more embraced her, she left the room, apparently gay, although in reality her heart was filled with sadness.

"Well!" exclaimed Stanley, on being left alone, "what is to be done? What *can* be done? Fool!—fool!—consummate, wretched fool! And yet, who could have conceived it to be possible! How am I to act? How *can* I act? What can I do? Nothing! I cannot expose that villain without exposing myself! For my own sake the matter must not be made public. If the object for which I gave him these bills were to be known, my reputation would be for ever blasted. But surely they'll not attempt to enforce payment! they'll not dare to proceed farther! It is, after all, probably done but to alarm me. Doubtless Clarendale suggested the thing in return for the part I took in that *soirée*. I wish now that I'd not made any stir at all in the matter. However, I must take no more notice of it now. I was a fool not to see through the whole trick before."

Had Stanley been a man of the world, he would have known that bills of exchange were not playthings, and had he known that, he would have known also how to proceed; but,

being utterly ignorant of the nature of bills, he, following the advice of Amelia, by looking on the bright side only, buoyed himself up with the idea of their presentation being neither more nor less than a joke. He therefore became quite gay, and during dinner gladdened the heart of Amelia by playfully explaining that he saw clearly then that he had been but the victim of an excellent jest.

Immediately after dinner, however, the servant informed him that a person had brought a private letter, with instructions to deliver it only into the hands of Mr. Thorn, which Stanley thought strange; but, conceiving it to be a communication from either Clarendale or Filcher, he desired his servant to show the messenger in. A person who had evidently seen better days was accordingly ushered into the room; but, on finding that Stanley was not as he had expected, alone, he hesitated, bowed, and looked very mysterious.

"Can I speak with you, sir, in private?" he inquired.

"You have a letter for me, I understand?"

"I have, sir, if I've the pleasure to address Mr. Thorn."

"That is my name. Where does it come from?"

"I'd rather deliver it to you, sir, in private."

"Oh! we are sufficiently private! Here, what is it all about?"

The messenger, although with evident reluctance, handed him the "letter," which was neither directed nor sealed, and which was found to contain nothing—but a writ!

Stanley's countenance instantly fell. The very moment he saw what it was, the idea of its being a jest vanished, and he became again enraged.

"Why, you impudent scoundrel," he exclaimed, "what do you mean by bringing this to me under false pretences?"

"It's an unpleasant duty, sir: still but my duty."

"Leave the room!" shouted Stanley, starting up fiercely, and pointing to the door.

"My dearest love!" cried Amelia, throwing her arms round his neck, in a dreadful state of trepidation, "my Stanley!—pray be calm—pray, pray, dear, be calm. Do leave," she added, turning to the messenger, "do, for *my* sake—pray leave the room."

The messenger accordingly did leave the room; but he thought it very hard, nevertheless, that, after doing the thing as delicately as possible, he should be so unhandsomely treated.

"What on earth is it?" cried Amelia, when this person had left.

"An insult!" replied Stanley, burning with rage.

"Pray do not resent it! But it may be but part of that jest of which you were speaking, after all."

Stanley thrust the writ into his pocket, and drank off several glasses of wine; while Amelia, who perceived that it would be inexpedient then to pursue the subject farther, was silent.

Scarcely five minutes, however, had elapsed, when the servant again entered to announce the arrival of another mysterious messenger, who had to make a communication of the utmost importance, and of a character so strictly confidential, that to deliver it to any one but Stanley himself, seemed to be something bearing the semblance of high treason.

"Bring him in!" cried Stanley, with a reckless air. "If he comes with a legion of devils at his back, bring him in!"

The servant stared as he bowed, for he couldn't tell exactly what to make of it. He evidently held it to be a sort of thing rather unusual, but he nevertheless managed to back out with grace; and having accomplished this feat, he introduced the child of mystery, who stood six feet and some odd inches high.

"Well! what do *you* want?" said Stanley, as this long individual entered.

"Mr. Thorn, have I the honour to address?"

"You have that *honour*."

"I have a document here," said the long person, gravely, and producing a writ, he presented it in form.

"Oh!" said Stanley, "that's it. Will you have a glass of wine?"

The long man bowed, and looked as amiable as if he thought that he really never met with so pleasant a fellow in the whole course of his life.

"You shall have one," said Stanley.

"I feel much obliged."

Stanley filled a bumper, and dashed it in his face.

"Will you have another?" he inquired.

The tall individual shook his head, for he really felt very uncomfortable.

"*Will* you have another?" repeated Stanley.

"No, I'll not."

"Then be off, or I'll kick you out of the house."

"*Kick* me, and I'll give you a little law. I should only just like to see you do it. Now then!—here I am!—kick me!"

"Stanley, Stanley!" cried Amelia, restraining him, as he was about to make a furious rush, "*dear* Stanley!—*do* you wish to see me fall dead at your feet? Go sir," she added, addressing the stranger, "*go*, if you are a man!—leave us, or blood will be shed!"

This intimation startled the stranger, who being by no

means valiant, retreated; but in his retreat, he amazingly blustered about what he would have done had he only been kicked.

"You will break my heart, Stanley," cried Amelia, when the tall man had left, "I am sure you will; I cannot endure it."

"Oh! nonsense!—nonsense!" said Stanley, who, having taken too much wine, assumed an air of reckless jollity. "Ha! ha! ha! ha! he looked like a drowned devil. I suppose we shall have a few more of them here by-and-bye. But don't be alarmed!—there's nothing to be alarmed at!—nothing—nothing—nothing!"

Amelia, who was convinced by the scowl which accompanied the slow utterance of the last word, that there was *something* to be apprehended, left the room, with the view of instructing the servant to state, if any other person called, that his master was indisposed, and therefore could not be seen; and having delivered this instruction, she was about to return to Stanley, when a single knock induced her to remain in the hall.

The door was opened. It was a policeman: he had called to serve an assault warrant; and Amelia, whose heart sank at the intelligence, tremblingly begged of him to leave it with her, and assured him that it should have due attention. The policeman consented; and as he was leaving, a notary's clerk came with one of the bills which had been presented in the morning. This also Amelia, who could scarcely sustain herself, wished to have left; but as the clerk declined, on the ground of its being *rather* unusual, she assured him that it should be attended to, and he seemed to be content. Before, however, the door had been closed, another notary's clerk called with the other dishonoured bill, which made Amelia tremble with increased violence. She did, however, manage to falter out the same assurance as that which she had previously given; but, having done so, she instantly fainted.

Stanley was of course unconscious of all this: he was, in fact, unconscious of almost everything, then; for having during Amelia's absence, proposed to himself innumerable toasts and sentiments,—such, for example, as "Confusion to Filcher, and all of that kidney,"—the whole of which he, of course, drank in bumpers,—he got on swimmingly in more senses than one; but although, while proposing these toasts, and returning thanks for the persons thus honoured, he appeared to repudiate all thought of care, the recollection of his real position stung him to the soul, and at intervals goaded him almost to madness.

Amelia, notwithstanding restoratives were applied with

sufficient promptitude and zeal, was for a long time insensible ; and when she recovered, it was but to be tortured by those dreadful feelings, which can be understood and appreciated only by those who are capable of conceiving the agony experienced by a fond, gentle, amiable wife, who perceives ruin rapidly approaching her home.

Resolved, however, not to sink before the blow had been struck, she rallied ; and, on finding herself sufficiently composed, returned to the dining-room, as Stanley was in the act of returning thanks in his sleep, for the ladies, at the head of whom he placed his Amelia, whose virtues he highly and eloquently extolled.

She tried to arouse him ; but as every effort failed, she placed a cushion beneath his head, and wept over him, and prayed to Heaven, with irrepressible fervour, that he might be blessed, and preserved from all perils, and continued to watch him anxiously till midnight, when he awoke.

His sleep had refreshed him ; but the effects of the wine were still apparent. He was pale and confused, and while his full eyes glared with an unnatural lustre, his language was strangely incoherent and wild.

Amelia ordered coffee, of which he partook, and they almost immediately afterwards retired ; but while he slept even more soundly than usual, her apprehensions lashed repose from her.

What hours, what miserable hours are those which are passed by the afflicted between midnight and dawn, when the soul is tortured, and the mind is on the rack, teeming with imaginary calamities, which appear in shapes more appalling than if they were real,—when all our thoughts conspire to afflict us,—when we are able to contemplate nothing but that which gives us pain, and when everything in nature seems reposing but our spirit, to which the power of endurance only appears to be allied. Even when the mind is comparatively tranquil, they are the most weary hours that are spent ; but when tortured by the conception of impending ruin, they are pregnant with agony. And in agony Amelia passed these wretched hours, of which the silence was broken only by her sighs, while she pressed Stanley closely to her heart, as if to be *sure* that she was not alone.

When the hour at which they usually rose had arrived, Stanley, who had some recollection of what had occurred the previous evening, made his customary apology, which was never on any occasion very elaborate, or drawn out to any great length ; but, although brief, Amelia received it, and sealed her forgiveness, as usual, with a kiss. The intelligence, however, having reference to the warrant, she did not commu-

nicate then; that she deferred till after breakfast, when she placed the imperative document into his hands, and explained to him the manner in which it had been left.

Having perused it, Stanley smiled, and assured her that it was a thing of no importance.

"But have you committed an assault?" she inquired.

"I knocked a fellow down at the door. They call *that* an assault, I suppose."

"How *can* you be so rash, dear? Really you will get into all sorts of trouble."

"Oh! I'll soon settle that. It's a matter of no moment whatever."

"But what could have induced you to do it?"

"Oh! he came here boring about a bill, or something of that sort."

"Then he called again last evening. Two persons called about bills!"

"Two! What did they say?"

"They wished to know if I thought they would be attended to, and I told them that they would. Did I do right?"

"Oh! yes; quite right—quite right—they shall be attended to with a vengeance!"

Being summoned to appear before the magistrate at eleven, he then ordered his cab, and, on its being brought, drove to the corner of Argyll Place, where he alighted, and walked to the police-office, at the door of which he was accosted by an officer, who informed him that the complainant had no desire to press the charge, provided he made him some slight compensation.

"I'll not give him a shilling!" said Stanley. "Let the thing take its course. I have reason to believe that he is connected with a gang of swindlers, into whose hands, it appears, certain bills of mine have fallen."

The policeman at once beckoned to the complainant, who approached with a pair of remarkably ugly black eyes, Stanley having struck him faithfully between them, and, in reply to a question touching the respectability of his connections, stated that he had been in the employ of the bankers for several years, and that all he had to do with the bill was to present it for payment in the regular course of business.

"Then," said Stanley, "do you mean to say that you know nothing of the parties?"

"Nothing whatever, sir, I assure you. I cannot be supposed to know the parties whose names are on the bills which come into my possession. I had fifty other bills in my book at the time, and I have on the average fifty every morning."



Stanley now perceived that he had made a mistake, and apologised for being so impetuous.

"I am sorry it occurred," said he. "My only excuse is, my utter ignorance of matters of business. What would the magistrate have fined me, had the case been brought before him?"

"Not *less* than three pound," replied the policeman. "The blow was tre-mendious!"

"It was rather severe, I perceive," rejoined Stanley. "How much of that fine would have been yours?"

"Oh! nothing," returned the policeman. "Fines always go to the crown."

Stanley immediately gave the victim five sovereigns, and one to the policeman for conducting the negociation; and, when they had expressed themselves perfectly satisfied, he returned to his cab, and drove home.

During his absence Amelia had had additional cause for alarm. Two other five hundred pound bills had been presented; and the notices, with two "*forthwith*" letters,—for it really would appear to be illegal for an attorney to send a letter without *forthwith* in it,—announcing the dishonour of two of Filcher's acceptances, were placed into his hands on his return.

This appeared to complete his prostration. Nothing seemed to be needed then either to subdue his spirit or to render his misery perfect. Raving was useless. He knew not how to act. The whole of the bills—eight for five hundred each—had been presented, and on the following day he had writs for them all.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE ELOPEMENT.

It having been stated that a certain transfer was about to be arranged between Filcher and the Earl, it will now be correct to explain that the object proposed to be transferred was the Countess.

Clarendale—the minds of whose family he greatly relieved by convincing them that his was a mock marriage only—had been so rallied since the *soirée* affair, that, being at the same time naturally apprehensive of another ridiculous display of dignity, he resolved to get rid of the annoyance if possible, without a public *exposé* being consequent thereon.

The difficulty of accomplishing this at first appeared to be

insurmountable. He felt quite sure that if he explained to his victim the atrocious deception he had practised, its immediate proclamation to the world would be inevitable, if even he were to offer a conditional annuity, to cease if the secret were revealed ; and being unable to devise any other means by which the object in view was ever likely to be attained, he applied to his friend Filcher, who at once undertook to carry her off, and thus to render whatever claim she might have upon him void.

For Clarendale this was, of course, the very thing. He applauded the notion highly, and having sufficiently flattered the vanity of his friend, by declaring that he believed him to be the only man who had the power to execute the design, he offered to give him five hundred pounds immediately after the elopement.

Filcher, knowing that he had to deal with as great a villain as himself, insisted upon having the money down before he started ; and, when this had been agreed to, he laid out his plans.

At first he proceeded with caution ; but having touched the right chord, he spoke with due indignation of the Earl's manifest indifference,—denounced him bitterly for neglecting one so amiable, so lovely, and so young,—and explained how she *ought* to be treated, what she *ought* to do and to have, and what every other Countess in the kingdom would *demand* !—without failing to describe how *he* would have indulged her had she been allied to him ; and as all this won the approbation of her mamma, whom he viewed as an admirable auxiliar, she soon became perfectly wretched.

Having succeeded thus far, he imagined all secure ; and, being anxious to be out of the way when Stanley's bills became due, he arranged all he had to arrange in town, and, notwithstanding he felt well convinced that any open attack even then would be repulsed, fixed the day for their departure.

At his suggestion, the Earl had been absent during three successive nights, and when he made his usual call the day before that on which he had decided upon starting, he listened to an afflicting recital of the fact with due gravity and attention.

"I am amazed," said he, when this had been indignantly dwelt upon by the Countess and her mamma, with whom he had managed to become an immense favourite, "I am perfectly amazed that a lady of spirit like the Countess should tolerate such horrible conduct. It really appears to me to be monstrous."

"Monstrous !" exclaimed her mamma. "It's abominable ! I wouldn't put up with it from any man, not if even he was a bishop ! Not I ; nor would she, if she was me."

"But how can I help it, ma ? What can I do ?" cried the Countess.

"Do! support your dignity! That's what do! Really you don't seem to me to have a nite of nobility about you. It's very well he hasn't me to deal with. Do you think that I'd be mumped up here in this perdicament; never going nowhere, nor nothing: no balls, no parties, no operas, nor nothing of that?"

"But what am I to do, ma, if he won't let me go?"

"Won't let you go! It's a pity you throwed yourself away upon him: that's *my* belief. But I would go! I'd go, if it was only out of spite!"

"Upon my honour," said Filcher, addressing the Countess, "I really must say that you are to be blamed. You make no stir at all in the world! You have rank, amiability, and beauty, with many other qualities calculated to enable you to shine forth with lustre in the most brilliant sphere, and yet with all these, by Heavens! you are scarcely known! I speak now with the warmth of a friend. I should not be a friend were I to conceal the fact from you. Who knows the Countess of Clarendale? Whom does she visit? Who visits her? In what fashionable circle does she move? Where is she ever met with? Where is she ever seen? These are questions which the world *will* ask, and who in the world is to answer?"

"Haven't I said the same thing over and over, and over again!" interposed Mrs. Gills. "Haven't I been dinging it into her ears daily!"

"The aristocracy of this country," pursued Filcher, "is composed of the most agreeable people under heaven; and why you, having so many advantages, should deprive yourself thus of their society, in which you would not only impart, but derive supreme delight, I really cannot at all understand."

"*Will* you tell me," said the Countess, earnestly, "what I am to do?"

"Why," replied Filcher, "it may be deemed presumptuous in me to offer you advice; but I should certainly say that you ought to do that which is done by other ladies of title."

"But how do they do? That is what I want to know. Suppose yourself now in my position, and then tell me how you would act."

"Have you ever been on the Continent?" rejoined Filcher.

"Never. I was once going as ladies'—"

"My precious!" exclaimed her mamma.

The Countess blushed and then resumed. "Yes, I was once going in company with some ladies, but—I didn't go—I never went at all."

"Then, if I were you," said Filcher, "I should in the very first place take a continental tour."

"But how am I to get him to go with me?"

"It is on that very point you err. You expect him to do everything for you, when in reality you ought to do everything for yourself."

"That's it!" exclaimed her mamma. "The very thing I've been a-harping upon till I'm sick."

"Well, but *how* am I to go, if so be he won't take me?"

"Is it absolutely necessary," observed Filcher, "that he should accompany you everywhere?"

"Certainly *not*," said Mrs. Gills. "The less a man is tied to a woman's apron-string the better."

"But do you mean to tell me now," rejoined the Countess, "that I can take a continental tower alone?"

"Alone!" returned Filcher. "No; that would be entirely out of the question. No lady of title ever travels alone. Your mamma would accompany you, of course."

"But ma can't talk French, you know, any more than me."

"Oh! that would not be of the slightest importance. Of course you would have with you some gentleman who could?"

"Ah!—well, I thought you couldn't mean that ma and me should go and run about the Continent alone. But what gentleman could we get to go with us?"

"Oh! hundreds would be delighted to accompany you, or any other lady of title. For instance, I think myself of starting for Calais to-morrow, and from thence I shall go to Paris, thence to Italy, Switzerland, and so on; and I am sure you may in any way command *my* services."

"But you don't mean to say that you are going off to-morrow?"

"I am, if nothing of importance should occur to prevent me."

"Oh! how dearly I should like to go too!"

"You would, I am sure, be delighted. Besides, it would be highly advantageous. You know," he added, addressing her mamma, "what an extremely elegant tone a continental trip gives to a woman of fashion."

"In course!—there's nothing like it!" returned Mrs. Gills.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Countess, "I should love to go dearly."

"Why not, then, make up your mind to go at once?"

"Well, I really have a great mind to ask him to let me."

"The old error!" said Filcher. "Why ask his *permission*? You are not his servant."

"That's just what I tell her," observed her mamma. "If she was only a mere housemaid, she couldn't do more."

"It should always be remembered," said Filcher, "that you are now your own mistress, and that the exalted position you occupy entitles you to have in all matters a will of your own."

"But would it be correct for me to go without asking his leave, or saying a word to him on the subject?"

"Of course! Decidedly. It is done by all ladies of title. It forms one of their chief characteristics. It is, in a word, that very independence which distinguishes them from people of no importance."

"That's it," said Mrs. Gills. "Independence is the thing. That's what I have always stuck up for."

"If, indeed," resumed Filcher, "you were to make up your mind, you might say, if you happened to see him, 'I am going for a short tour on the Continent with mamma and Captain Filcher;' but should you not see him, why, all you need do then would be to write a note to that effect, and desire your servant to give it to him on his return. But probably you have no desire to travel?"

"Oh! I should love it above all things! Shouldn't you, ma?"

"Certainly, my love: I have always longed to see foreign parts; and I am sure, as the Captain says, in your present position, it would do you all the good in the world."

"Besides," observed Filcher, "the advantages to be derived from it at this particular time are incalculable; for, independently of the continental tone which the Countess would acquire, and which is of itself an extremely valuable acquisition, her absence from Clarendale just now would have the effect of raising her in his estimation; for it appears to be very clear to me that he does not sufficiently appreciate her value."

"That's very true," said Mrs. Gills; "no more he doesn't. He don't know what a treasure he's got. I'll say it, although she's my daughter."

"So that you see," resumed Filcher, "that while sustaining her dignity, and deriving all the brilliant advantages of foreign travel, she would be laying the foundation of her importance at home, and extending her influence, as a lady of title ought."

"To be sure she would. It's my notion, precisely."

"But lor, though if we *were* to go!" exclaimed the Countess. "My patience me, though, what *would* he say?"

"Why, that you were what every lady of title ought to be, — a woman of spirit," replied Filcher. "He would be pleased, I am sure of it, and would have a higher opinion of you than ever. But I beg you'll not allow me to persuade you against your own inclinations."

"Oh, dear me, no! I should, I am sure, be delighted!"

"I merely throw out the hint as a friend, in the full convic-

tion of its being the only way to bring him to a sense of what is due to you ; and, as I *am* going, it will not of course put me at all out of the way ; and I am quite sure that Clarendale, when he hears that I am with you, will feel perfectly satisfied of your being well protected."

"But won't it be very expensive?" inquired Mrs. Gills.

"Oh ! not at all. You can live on the Continent, you know, for a mere trifle. But I'll manage that. I should like you to go, because I think you would be so enchanted."

"Well, what do you think, ma? Shall we?"

"Why it's an opportunity that certainly don't ought to be lost, my love, that's what I look at. But then, you see, the mischief of it is, there's no time to prepare."

"The notice is very short," added the Countess.

"So much the better," cried Filcher. "It will show that you are not only a woman of spirit, but a creature of impulse!—which is highly important."

"But I think," said Mrs. Gills, "it would be just as well, you know, to name the subject to him."

"Oh ! I'd name it to him, by all means, if he came home ; but if not, why, it's a thing which in high life is never expected. Look among the fashionable arrivals and departures in any of the daily papers, and you will see that the Duchess of So-and-so started for the lakes. Where's the Duke? Why, in town ! That the Countess of Grogram, for example, has just arrived from the Continent. Where is the Earl? Why, over there. Among the aristocracy, these things are understood. They are not like *common* people ; they are perfectly independent of each other."

"Oh, I see the distinction," observed Mrs. Gills ; "and a very good distinction it is, in my mind. It is nothing but proper that people of quality should conduct themselves distinct from the mere common scum."

"Well, ma, *shall* we go?"

"Oh, I'm *quite* agreeable, my love ; and I think we ought to be much obliged to the Captain into the bargain."

"Not at all," cried Filcher. "Oh, dear ma, no—not at all. I shall feel highly honoured."

"Won't it be nice, ma? Won't it be beautiful when we return, to say we've been to Paris, and we've been to Germany, and we've been to Italy, and seen this and that. My gracious me, though, won't it be delicious? I shall be in such a fidget until we are off!"

"I thought of starting at ten to-morrow morning ; but if that be too early for you, why we'll say eleven."

"Oh! ten o'clock will do," said the Countess. "Ma and me can be both of us ready by ten."

"Well, then, let me see," said Filcher. "There will be you, your mamma, and myself,—that will be three; my servant and yours will make five altogether. Yes, that will do well."

"Oh, then, I'm to take a servant with me?"

"By all means, I should say. You will find it more convenient."

"Very well. We'll be ready. You'll be sure not to be later than ten?"

"At ten precisely the carriage shall be at the door," replied Filcher, who then took leave, and went direct to the hotel at which he knew the Earl was waiting to hear the result.

"What a nice man!" observed Mrs. Gills, when he had left. "I shouldn't a bit mind marrying such a man as that. He's such a gentleman!"

"That he is, isn't he, ma?" cried the Countess.

"And understands the ways of the nobility so well."

"And such a dear, too, to offer so kindly to 'scort us. I wonder though what my lord 'll say!"

"Oh, it'll bring him to his senses. It'll show him you ain't the poor speritless thing he takes you for. He'll treat you all the better. As the Captain says, there's nothing in the world like supporting your independence and dignity. It's just what I've always stuck up for. You know I've told you, times out of number, that you'd only to show that you had a little proper aristocracy about you to get yourself respected in your spere. But come, my precious! we've no time to lose!"

"Well, I hope he'll come home, though, so that we may tell him!"

"Don't bother your head about that. If he comes home we'll tell him: if he don't he don't ought to be told. We'll just leave a note, and then start. All ladies of quality does it, and that's quite enough."

Of course the Earl took especial care not to return. Nor would he even leave the hotel, lest they should, by any accident, see him. He and the Captain dined together, and having passed a jovial evening, separated with feelings of mutual satisfaction.

Punctually at ten on the following morning the Captain arrived in a carriage and four, and was much pleased to find that their minds were unchanged: indeed, they appeared to be more anxious than ever to go—a fact which was chiefly ascribable to the circumstance of Clarendale having been again

out all night. Everything was in readiness. They were already dressed; the trunks were packed, and placed in the hall, while the servants were waiting to attach them to the carriage, and when this had been accomplished they started for Dover, without a moment's unnecessary delay.

As the Captain had engaged to take the carriage four stages, they proceeded in the most agreeable manner over Shooter's Hill, through Welling, Gravesend, Dartford and Rochester, to Sittingbourne. Here they stopped to take refreshment, and here it was that the Captain resolved to execute his design of escaping from the lively society of Mrs. Gills.

Having conducted the ladies into the inn, and given the necessary orders, he left them, and went into the yard, where he engaged two chaises for Canterbury, and called aside one of the post-boys, whose countenance he for some time scrutinised in the most mysterious manner.

"I think," said he at length,—"*I think* that I may trust you!"

The fellow opened his mouth, and scratched his head, and looked as if he didn't understand it: nor did he.

"I do not believe that I am mistaken," pursued Filcher. "I can generally tell by the look of a man what he is; and if I am *not* deceived, I shall put five pounds at once into your pocket, and make you a handsome present on my return."

The man stared, and looked *extremely* concerned? his amazement was unspeakable! he couldn't make it out. Still, in the midst of his consternation he gracefully caught hold of a tuft of ragged hair upon his forehead, with the view of conveying the idea of a most respectful bow,

"I'm *sure* I may trust you," continued Filcher, gravely. "I'll therefore explain. I have two ladies with me—one young and lovely, the other old and very disagreeable. Now the young one—to come to the point at once—I want to run away with, and as with your assistance I can manage it with ease, the only question is, will you aid me?"

Postboys are known, by all men of experience, to be the most chivalrous dogs upon the road,—the best fellows under heaven to assist in an elopement,—and as this was really one of the true breed, he without hesitation consented.

"Boot," said he, "how be it to be doon? I marn't go the wrong rood!"

"Can't you pull the chaise into some dry ditch?" suggested Filcher, "and there stick for an hour or so?"

"To be sure I can! That's capital, be gum! I never thoot o' that now till you did. I'll do't."

"I may depend upon you?"



"Oh! I'll do't!—I'll do't!"

"Very well. Then let *your* chaise stand first at the door—there must be no mistake about that,—and when you get about half way between this and Canterbury, why there let us pass you, and *then*—you understand?"

"Oh! I'll do't handy, sir; never fear that."

The Captain then gave him five pounds and returned to the ladies.

"I am sorry," said he, on entering the room, "that we must separate until we get to Canterbury. The carriage in which we came must go back, and I can get nothing here but a couple of chaises, neither of which will carry more than two."

"Oh! we shall be able to manage!" cried the Countess.

"I'm at a loss to guess how! You see these machines have no seats outside. It is true, my servant can sit upon the bar; but then, what's to become of yours?"

"Oh! let her ride inside with me!" said Mrs. Gills. "I don't mind, you know!—nobody won't see us!"

This act of condescension was appreciated by the Captain, who, in return, however, simply said, "Well, as you please."

Accordingly, having concluded their repast, the Captain handed Mrs. Gills and the maid into the first chaise with unexampled grace, and when the Countess and himself were duly seated in the other,—to which all the trunks had been attached by his direction, their journey was resumed.

Entertaining in the extreme was the Captain, while the Countess was delighted as well with him as with herself, and thus they proceeded steadily, until they got to Faversham, where they passed the other chaise, which stopped ostensibly in order that one of the bridles might be slightly re-adjusted.

The Countess waved her hand as she passed, of course, and was recognised by her mamma, to whom the Captain mentally bade adieu, feeling convinced then that all was secure.

Nor was he deceived. On remounting, the postboy, who drove Mrs. Gills, followed with *great* care for nearly two miles, when all at once his horses began to kick, and plunge, and snort, in the most miraculous manner possible.

"Be careful, there's a *good* man;" cried Mrs. Gills, thrusting her head out of one of the front windows.

"Blarm yer! wo!" cried the postboy, backing his horses violently. "Wo! D'yer want to get into the dike?"

And in an instant—in the twinkling of an eye—and with all the ingenuity at his command, he pulled the chaise into a ditch, which contained, instead of water, black mud, thickly coated with chick-weed.

"Oh! we shall be drowned!" shrieked Mrs. Gills, and that shriek was duly echoed by the maid, who entertained the same opinion.

"I *thought* what you was up to!" cried the postboy, who was somewhat of a wag in his way. "I knowed you was arter suffin'. What d'yer mean, hay? Ain't the rood wide enow for yer? Blarm yer carcasses! couldn't yer be satisfied arout gettin' into the dike?"

"We shall be killed!—we shall be killed!" exclaimed Mrs. Gills frantically. "Oh! my good man! my dear—good man!—pray get us out—*pray* do!"

"Don't be alarmed mum!—oh! don't be alarmed! there's nothin' bruk! It'll be right ag'in in a little while, blarm 'em! They *must* get into the dike! I knowed what they was arter! They're about the most warmentest cattle as is. If they ever take anythin' into their heads—"

"Well—well—well! get us out! pray—pray get us out! Oh dear! I am ready to die."

The fellow then opened the door, and with his aid they managed to alight in perfect safety, when he begged of them both as a favour not to be frightened, and set to work with the apparent view of getting the chaise out of the ditch.

And his efforts were desperate. They were almost indeed superhuman. He reasoned with his horses, and lashed and pulled, while the wheels sank deeper and deeper, until at length, having dexterously backed into two good feet of consistent mud, he gave the thing up in despair.

"It's o' no use," said he, in a state of steaming perspiration. "It bean't a single ha'p'orth o' use! I *can't* get un out!"

"What on earth are we to do, then?" exclaimed Mrs. Gills.

An idea seemed to strike him. "I have it!" said he; and he had. "Just walk about a little bit, ladies, and I'll just gallop off for soom help."

This was held by Mrs. Gills to be an admirable thought, and he immediately took his horses out, tied the head of the off-one to the wheel, mounted the other, and started back to Faversham for assistance, while the ladies promenaded in front of the chaise, in a horrible state of alarm.

Now, although the fellow went at a slapping pace until he had got out of sight, truth prompts the admission that he was, after that, in no hurry at all. He did, however, manage by dint of perseverance to do the last mile in about fifty minutes; and, having accomplished that extraordinary feat, engaged three stout men, with whom, after having four pots of ale, he hastened back at the rate of full three miles an hour, until they came in sight of the chaise, when he started off again at

full gallop, while the men commenced running as if from a fiend.

By this time the patience of both Mrs. Gills and the maid was as nearly as possible exhausted. To them the man appeared to have been gone a whole day! His re-appearance, however, cheered their weary hearts; and when he and his men came up breathless and hot, he received great applause for his noble exertions.

They then commenced work, and after having ingeniously experimentalized for about twenty minutes, they happily succeeded in getting the chaise out; and when Mrs. Gills had rewarded the men, and begged of the postboy to drive with all the speed that might indeed be consistent with their safety, they started once more.

The postboy, who then seemed most anxious to prove that his chief characteristic was caution, got his horses fairly into a legitimate jog and explained to them at length what he thought of their conduct with due indignation and point.

Having finished this lecture to his own satisfaction, he began to sing with nearly all the voice he had in him; and thus did he amuse himself, quite at his ease, until he arrived within half a mile of Canterbury, when, in order to finish his work with *éclat*, he treated his horses to a fair full trot, and dashed in style into the town.

Here immediate inquiries were made for the Countess and her companion; but, instead of finding them there, as she expected, Mrs. Gills ascertained that after waiting some time they had gone on. She therefore instantly ordered a fresh chaise, and followed them to Dover with all possible speed, but her search there was equally fruitless; for the Captain, on his arrival, having learned that a packet would start in an hour for Calais, instructed his servant to take all the luggage on board, which being effected, the Countess, of course, felt compelled in a measure to go on board too. This, however, was not done without great reluctance. She naturally wanted to wait for her mamma. What on earth could have become of her? What could she do on her arrival, when she found that they were gone?

The Captain calmed her fears by explaining that her mamma had in all probability been taken "the longest way round;" that, of of course, she would be certain to find them at Calais; and that his servant,—to whom he had given private instructions—should remain to attend to her when she arrived; and having thus overruled her objections, they went on board the packet, which left Dover nearly two hours before Mrs. Gills reached the Royal Hotel.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ARREST—THE PROPOSAL—THE DUEL, AND ITS RESULT.

BEING totally unacquainted with the imperative character of the legal instruments he had then in his possession, Stanley knew not what course to pursue, but as Sir William had been from the first cognisant of the speculation into which he had entered, he eventually decided on soliciting his advice under the circumstances, conceiving that this might be done without his poverty being exposed.

He accordingly lost no time in laying the whole matter before him, and when the case had been fully explained, Sir William appeared to be, not only greatly surprised, but extremely indignant.

"However," said he, "the thing is too gross to succeed. Take no sort of notice of these writs, treat them with contempt."

"I should not care," said Stanley, "if it were a *bonâ fide* debt."

"Of course not; of course not; you'd settle it at once. But this is a fraud! a positive fraud! It is all very well for them thus to try it on; but it is sure to come to nothing, unless, indeed, you are disposed to be frightened out of your money!"

"They'll not *frighten* me," replied Stanley. "That's quite out of the question. If that be their object, they'll fail."

"Then let them pursue their own course; let them cut their own throats. You will receive other papers in a few days, doubtless—burn them! When they find that you set them at defiance, they'll very soon relinquish their swindling scheme. It would indeed be monstrous if, in a country like this, a fraud so glaring and direct could succeed."

Acting upon this advice, which was of course the very worst that could have been given, Stanley troubled himself no more about the matter. The declarations came, then the order to tax; but no notice whatever was taken until one of the parties had obtained final judgment.

Unconscious of the nature of the position in which he stood, having no more knowledge than a child of the fact that he might, at any hour, be arrested. Stanley continued to go about as usual; but the day after that on which the party had entered up judgment, he was accosted near the Albany by a person, who having approached him with an air of great mystery, touched his arm and said in an interesting whisper, "Mr. Thorn, will you walk on? I'll follow you."

"What do you mean?" inquired Stanley, who had not the most distant idea of the fellow's object. "Walk on?"

"Yes; and then no notice will be taken. I wouldn't have seen you myself, but you have just been pointed out to me."

"What do you mean?"

The man smiled, and although he felt sure that his meaning was well understood, expressed himself quietly to the effect that the thing, in all probability, had not been expected.

"Will you," said Stanley, "explain yourself at once?"

"Don't you know a sheriff's officer when you see him?" inquired the man, who really thought it a capital joke. "But, perhaps, you have never been taken before?"

Stanley now clearly perceived how it was, and the truth no sooner struck him than he became extremely tremulous and turned very pale. "Step this way with me," said he, "I wish to consult a friend on this subject."

"Anything to oblige," returned the officer, who followed him at once to Sir William's chambers.

"It appears that I am arrested," said Stanley, as he entered.

"Arrested!" echoed Sir William. "What, at the suit of those swindlers? Impossible!"

"Here is the officer! It does not *appear* to be impossible!"

"Well, I am amazed. The impudent scoundrels! However, we'll soon settle this. You must go of course now; but I'll walk down with you, and ascertain what can be done. I'll work the rascals. I—leave them to me."

Stanley with a feeling of gratitude consented; and perhaps there are no conceivable circumstances under which a man appreciates the kind offices of a friend more highly than when situated as he was then. We are generally inclined, despite the cold-blooded doctrines of the hypocondriacal, to view the bright side of human nature, to confide in the faith of our fellow-men, to believe that there is infinite goodness in them, to repudiate the thought that "friends are always friends except when friends are needed," and, to reverse the unamiable precept which would prompt us to look upon every man as a rogue until we have absolutely proved him to be an honest man; but more strongly than ever do we incline to the belief—a belief perhaps partially based upon hope, that in the human heart kindness predominates when in periods of difficulty men come forward with the ostensible view of rendering all possible assistance: it is then that we are most credulous on the subject of friendship; it is then that faith generates feelings of pride; it is then that we flatter ourselves with the assurance that we have friends—true friends—friends prepared to make any sacri-

fice to serve us ; it is then that we are most blinded by professions of friendship, and therefore most easily deceived.

Stanley felt that Sir William was his friend more strongly than ever ; he was, indeed, anxious to be guided by him solely, while the promptitude with which he undertook to "see him through it" inspired him with far more gratitude than his pride would allow him to express.

Having accompanied him to one of those establishments, in which respectable debtors usually receive their first impressions on the subject of the deprivation of social liberty, Sir William reassured him that he would immediately call upon the attornies and that nothing that could be done should be left undone by him.

"But Amelia," said Stanley, "how are we to conceal it from her?"

"Oh, I'll manage that. You have been unexpectedly called into the country, or something of that sort."

"No," said Stanley—"no—no—that will not do : suspicion would at once be excited ; she would never believe that anything could induce me to go out of town without taking leave of her. No ; perhaps, as it appears that there is not much chance of my getting out of this place to-day, it would be better to explain it to her—gradually."

"Well ; you know her best : let it be so. Will you write then, or shall I prepare her to receive the intelligence, and then bring it out in the course of conversation?"

"Why, you can explain it in that way with greater effect than I can in a letter. You can say, you know, of course that the thing has been done to annoy me, and so on."

"I'll manage it. But I shall see you again before then : I'll return directly after I have seen the attornies, in order that you may know the result."

Stanley thanked him warmly and he left, not however with the slightest intention of calling up the attornies, but solely in order to perfect that scheme which he conceived might be then carried into execution. With this view he went to a neighbouring tavern and having sufficiently, in his judgment, dwelt upon the course to be pursued, and weighed each particular point with great minuteness, he returned to Stanley, to whom he stated, with an expression of disappointment, that the attornies in question could not be seen until the following morning when promising to be with them very early and to come direct from them to him he left, ostensibly, in order to explain to Amelia the nature of Stanley's position.

Amelia, whose happiness had daily increased since Stanley had become less impetuous, and who fondly conceived that

that happiness would be permanent, as his passion for the gaieties of life had been materially subdued, was expecting him home when Sir William arrived. She was alone; the widow had just before left her; but when Sir William had been announced, he was shown into the drawing-room and received as a much valued friend.

"I expect Stanley every moment," she observed. "He is sure not to be long."

"Has he not been home within the last hour or two?"

"No; he has been out the whole of the morning."

"Then you are probably not aware that I am to have the honour of dining with you to-day?"

"The honour will be ours," returned Amelia with a smile, which was highly appreciated by Sir William, who bowed, and then entered into the various topics of the day, which were discussed on both sides with great spirit.

At length, however, Amelia began to get impatient. "How tiresome," she exclaimed, "it is more than half an hour past the time! But you gentlemen are all very tiresome creatures."

"All, did you say?"

"I said all, certainly; but Sir William, on this occasion, must of course be excepted. It will, I perceive, be more safe to say the majority, in future."

This led to a playful debate, which occupied another half hour, when Amelia exclaimed: "Well, now really, this is indeed very vexatious. I cannot conceive what on earth can detain him!"

"I begin to fear now," observed Sir William, "that we shall not have the pleasure of dining with him to-day."

"Oh, dear yes, I hope so! However, we'll give him one quarter of an hour longer; we'll give him no more. If he should not return by that time he must have, when he does return, a very severe scolding."

The next quarter of an hour was passed in most lively conversation, and the next, when, as Stanley of course did not make his appearance, Amelia, with great reluctance, rang the bell, and having given the necessary instructions, was led by Sir William into the dining room with an expression of disappointment which she could not conceal, although feeling, as a matter of courtesy, bound to be, if possible, gay.

During dinner, politeness the most refined alone characterized the conduct of Sir William, but that ceremony ended, he called all his brilliant conversational powers into play. As a man of the world in the common acceptation of that term, he had too much tact to permit precipitation in any case to weaken the chances of conquest, and while he knew that any direct attack

upon virtue forms virtue's most invulnerable panoply, he attached due weight to the fact that wit and irony, highly tempered, are the most potent weapons that can be used, when the object in view is virtue's gradual subversion. He therefore sought to assail it imperceptibly at first, and then to proceed to an analysis of its nature, and having opened the subject of marriage he pursued it in a most lively strain, dwelling playfully upon its varied characteristics, and ironically darting at married persons, in the aggregate, the most highly polished shafts of ridicule.

Into all this Amelia entered, defending with spirit every point he asserted, and contrasting the most delightful features of married life with those which he portrayed, and which were of course the most unamiable, without entertaining the most remote idea that he had any other object in view than that of whetting the dulness which, in her judgment, during Stanley's absence invariably characterized time.

At length, conceiving that he had made an excellent beginning, he approached nearer home, and having dwelt upon the credulity of married ladies in general on the subject of their husbands' fidelity, and adduced a variety of instances to illustrate the strength of the position he had assumed, he spoke of Stanley, and after alluding to his personal attractions, observed, "Now, I should not be at all surprised if you, even you, were to repudiate the idea of his being unfaithful."

"Why, it would not be very surprising," returned Amelia, "if I did; and I certainly should, if it were possible for such an idea to be entertained."

"Just as I expected! You would not believe it!—No, not for the world!"

"I would not believe it for the world, without cause, nor would I, for the whole world, have cause to believe it."

"Of course you would not! I knew that! Nor would you hold anything to be a sufficient cause."

"Why—yes—that I might do."

"Impossible!—surely!"

"Why," rejoined Amelia smiling, "the circumstances certainly would have to be very strong!"

"But what conceivable circumstances could be strong enough?"

"Nay, that I cannot tell! But do you not think that a man of Stanley's principle, strength of mind and delicacy of feeling would be utterly incapable of any act, involving the sacrifice of honour?"

Sir William smiled.

"But, tell me," interrupted Amelia, resolved to adhere to



that point; "do you imagine that such a man would thus wantonly blight his own happiness and that of those with whom he is connected?"

"Certainly he ought not; but it does not follow, that because a man is faithless, the happiness of his home must be blighted!"

"Indeed?"

"If it did, I fear that happiness among married persons would have but an imaginary existence."

"Nay; now you are too severe!"

"No; not at all."

"But you surely do not mean to say that such a man as Stanley would be unfaithful?"

"Why, I don't know that he is so much unlike the rest."

"I have not so unworthy an opinion of the rest."

"Which proves the amiability of your character."

"Nor have you, I feel convinced, seriously."

"I cannot be serious on a subject of this kind; I cannot be tranquil," cried Sir William with a smile, "I feel much too indignant! But men are clever creatures—I allude more especially to married men—who certainly do inspire with confidence those whom they constantly deceive, to an extent that is perfectly amazing. Let them remain out the whole day or even all night, it's a matter of no importance; the most absolute impunity awaits them. Let them keep as many mistresses as fancy may prompt them to keep, neglecting those whom they vowed to honour and cherish, they have but to invent certain plausible tales, and, as you silly people believe them, they are of course all right with their consciences and you."

"Not, I apprehend, with their consciences!"

"Conscience sleeps while pleasure reigns!"

"To sting with ten-fold force when awakened. But you are speaking of men without principle—profligate men!"

"I speak of them all—all married men do it, more or less."

"Nay, nay; that I cannot believe."

"I did not for a moment expect that you would! As far as our dazzling friend Stanley is concerned, you would not believe anything prejudicial to his reputation, were you even to know where he is, where he has been the whole of the day, and where moreover he is likely to be the whole of the night."

Amelia's countenance instantly changed. "Are you serious?" she inquired with an expression of the most intense earnestness. "Have you the slightest knowledge of where he is now?"

"It is manifest, by his continued absence, that he is in most attractive company."

"But do you know where he is?"

"Why I *could* give a pretty shrewd guess?"

"Where then do you imagine him to be?"

"Nay, that is a question which I must not answer. It would not be exactly fair between man and man. No, although his treatment of me to-day in remaining there when he had invited me here has not been, perhaps, precisely the thing, I am not at all disposed to retaliate in that way. If, indeed—"

"Sir William," interrupted Amelia, "I would submit that this is a subject which ought not to be pursued."

"Why not, my dear madam?"

"Because, setting all ideas having reference to your friendship for Stanley aside, it may lead us beyond the strict bounds of delicacy."

"Oh, but these things in society are thought but little of. They happen daily—they are, in fact, occurrences for which every married lady ought to be prepared."

"I am not; nor do I wish to be prepared. But we must not dwell upon this subject any longer, for you jest so earnestly, that were I not secure in Stanley's honour, you would positively make me quite jealous."

"Oh you ladies! you ladies! We have but returned to the point from which we started; we have but proved your credulity on this subject to be unbounded."

A pause ensued; during which Amelia dwelt with unenviable feelings upon the various intimations she had received. Why—why did not Stanley return? Were there any sufficient grounds for suspicion? Where was he? In whose society? What could have detained him? It was strange! very strange!—Surely he had not been seduced into the vortex of vice! His honour surely had preserved him! He was faithful and virtuous still! And yet, why—why did he not return?

Sir William, who watched with delight the development of those feelings which these unhappy thoughts had induced, and who exhibited every disposition to remain, although he saw that Amelia was most anxious for him to leave, suffered silence to prevail for some considerable time; but, at length, he exclaimed: "Well! you see, he does not return—nor will he to-night!"

"Oh do not say so; I hope, nay I feel quite sure that he will."

"I can bear this no longer!" cried Sir William with a gesture which was intended to convey the idea that his feelings had been wound up to the very highest pitch of endurance.

"Entertaining, as I do, the most exalted respect for your character, knowing as I do the confiding gentleness and unexampled

amiability of your disposition, I feel myself bound by every principle of manliness, friendship, and justice, to conceal no longer the fact of his being utterly unworthy of you."

"Sir!" exclaimed Amelia fixing her eyes upon him with a flash of indignation.

"Do not misinterpret my object," he observed.

"What is your object?"

"To rescue an amiable creature from one who is as vain as he is heartless, one who can neither appreciate her admirable qualities nor love her."

Amelia, darting a look of contempt at him, instantly rose and rang the bell; but although this prompt proceeding in some slight degree amazed him, he, instead of appearing disconcerted, smiled, and remained silent until the servant entered.

"Is Sir William's carriage at the door?" inquired Amelia

"I believe not, ma'am," replied the servant.

"Let me know when it arrives," said Sir William with perfect coolness, and as the servant immediately bowed and retired, he added "Why, my dear madam, why will you not hear me? I know that these truths are unpalatable, yet they are truths nevertheless—truths of which you ought not to remain in ignorance."

"Sir William Wormwell," said Amelia firmly, "I have, up to this hour, regarded you as a most sincere friend, but I now look upon you as a most specious, treacherous enemy."

"My dear creature, do not apply such harsh, cruel terms to him who adores you!"

"Leave me, sir, instantly!"

"Amelia!"

"Sir—how dare you thus address me? What have I ever perceived in my conduct to lead you to imagine that insult would be endured?"

"My dear creature, since you will not allow me to call you Amelia—loving you better than all the world, I would not for the whole world insult you."

"But you have, sir, insulted me grossly."

"Then on my knee I beg pardon—and while on my knee—since love is no crime—let me entreat you to listen to me but for a moment."

"Rise, sir, and leave me!"

"I will not until I have, at least, declared that ardent passion, whose fire consumes my very soul."

Again Amelia rose and seized the bell-rope, but her hand was arrested by Sir William, who exclaimed "For Heaven's sake, for the sake of your own reputation, which I prize far more highly than life, do not ring that bell again. Amelia! I

*must* call you so—if you cannot look upon me with affection, at least consider that you have made me what I am—that your beauty has inspired me with love which I never had for any living creature before—that your gentle, amiable disposition has caused me to centre every hope I have in you ; consider this, dear, lovely Amelia—consider, also, that you are the slave—the devoted slave of one who is now, at this very hour, wantonly, heartlessly, brutally ridiculing the patient love of her whom he solemnly swore at the altar to cherish ; and having thus considered, you will not, and I feel that you will not spurn him who adores you. Amelia—my soul's idol—you are the only one on earth—”

“ *Will* you leave me ! ”

“ Yes ; when I have laid bare my heart.”

“ Already I perceive it—I perceive that it *swells* with baseness.”

“ No—upon my honour ! ”

“ Honour !—honour and treachery cannot co-exist ; therefore leave me ! ”

“ Nay listen to me but for a moment. What *have* you to fear ? ”

“ Nothing ! strong in the affection of him whom you have basely defamed, and deriving additional strength from a due appreciation of my own honour, I have nothing to *fear*, but I will not, in silence, tolerate an insult.”

“ My dear soul, again let me beg of you to believe that I would not insult you for the world.”

“ Again let me remind you that I have been insulted. I will not, therefore, hear another syllable. So thoroughly disgusted am I with your conduct, that unless you leave instantly, I will cause you to be so far degraded as to be forced by my wants from the house. I now ring the bell again,” she said, suiting the action to the word. “ It is therefore for you to decide.”

“ Is Robert below ? ” she inquired when the servant had made his appearance.

“ He is, ma’am.”

“ Desire him to come up. You perceive,” she continued addressing Sir William, “ that I am resolved.”

“ My dear soul, the servants could never force me from the house ; were they to make the attempt, I should convert them into foot-balls for sport ; but having too much respect for you, to cause any disturbance, I will, as you wish it, at once take my leave ; but in the perfect conviction that before many hours have passed, you will have ample reason to believe that all I have stated with reference to him, by whom you are thus heartlessly neglected, is true.”

"Robert," said Amelia, as Bob at this moment entered, "show Sir William out."

Bob bowed, and looked precisely as if a slight explanation would have been very agreeable, for he did not pretend to understand it. Collecting his faculties, however, he vanished, and Sir William, having offered his hand to Amelia, by whom it was proudly rejected, slowly followed him to the door.

"Well," thought Bob, having performed the great duty thus imposed, with appropriate grace, "of all I ever heard of since Great Britain was a little un, this breaks the bank. It's a regular queer go. Why should I have been appointed? It isn't as if he wished to make me a present, because he didn't! nor is it as if he wanted to do me the honour to make me believe that he liked me to let him out better than any one else, because he looked blessed cross! I'd give a little trifle to get at the bottom of it: something's a fluctuating, safe! It's so mysterious! But mysteries is queer, any day in the week."

Although the firmness of Amelia never forsook her for an instant, while in the presence of Sir William, although her eyes flashed indignantly as she repulsed him, while her lip curled with withering contempt; the very moment he had left her she burst into tears.

"Stanley!" she convulsively exclaimed. "Dear Stanley! why do you not return to me!—why by your absence thus seem to confirm the suspicions awakened by that vile man! Where are you, Stanley? Can it be—No! I'll not believe it!"

Tortured by apprehensions which could not be calmed—racked by the recollection of those dreadful intimations upon which she could not for one moment cease to dwell; she paced the room in a state of mind bordering on distraction until midnight, when, in piercing tones, she fervently ejaculated: "God! grant me patience!"

The agony, the excruciating agony, she endured between midnight and dawn may be conceived. Every hour teemed with fresh apprehensions, every hour was fraught with additional confirmation of those suspicions which she zealously laboured to banish from her mind. Nor when the time, which after a weary lonely night usually brings with it some consolation, had arrived, when the glorious sun had mounted and shedding his lustre upon the earth, seemed designed by a beneficent God to inspire every creature with happiness—was she less sad: indeed, as the day advanced her anguish increased, for she knew not what to think, nor how to act. She had, on a former occasion, sent round to his friends and had thereby incurred his displeasure; she therefore dared not send to them in this instance, nor did she feel, judging from what

she had heard, that inquiries among his friends would be otherwise than useless. She could therefore do nothing but sigh, and sob, and weep, and pray for patience.

Sir William, whose vanity the repulse he experienced the previous evening had seriously wounded, conceiving that the spirit of Amelia would be subdued by the continued absence of Stanley, resolved about noon to renew the attack. He therefore returned to the charge with this infamous object in view, and feeling persuaded that unless he had recourse to a *ruse* of some sort, Amelia would not see him, he sent up his card, with an intimation that he had a message from Stanley which he was anxious to deliver without delay.

The first impulse of Amelia on receiving this card was to cause herself at once to be denied; but, on reflection, being naturally anxious to hear in any shape from Stanley, she directed the servant to show him up.

With apparent humility and penitence, the miscreant thereupon entered, while Amelia stood firmly and proudly, although impatient to receive the communication he had to make.

"My dear madam," said he, bowing profoundly, "I have to offer ten thousand apologies for my conduct last evening, which may have appeared—"

"Sir," interrupted Amelia, "I require no apology. You have, I am informed, a message from my husband."

"I have; but before I deliver that message I must beg of you to pardon those ardent expressions which may have appeared *prima facie* unwarrantable if not indelicate, but which, let me assure you, were prompted by that inextinguishable affection with which your surpassing amiability and beauty have inspired my soul, and which nothing on earth, not even your scorn, intolerable as it is—"

"I presume," said Amelia with dignified firmness, "that your object in obtaining this interview with me, is that which you announced."

"It is. But why treat with this cruel coolness one who has your happiness so nearly at heart; one whose every hope is centred in your smile, and whose highest aspirations—"

"If, sir, your object be that which I have been led to resume, it is—"

"Nay, why so relentless? why so impatient?"

"Have you a communication from my husband, or have you not?"

"Beautiful Amelia! On my knee, while worshipping the idol of my soul, I implore you—"

"Albert!" exclaimed Amelia, rushing towards her brother, who at this moment entered the room.

"Hallo! I say! well? what's the row?" cried Albert as Amelia clung to him convulsively. "Anything broke? That's a pretty position for a man to be diskivered in! But, Meley, you don't mean to say you've been insulted?"

"Grossly, Albert, grossly."

"You have!" exclaimed Albert, leading her to a couch. "Well, I say, old boy!" he added, turning to Sir William.

"What do you mean?"

"What is it to you?" cried Sir William indignantly.

"What is it to me? Oh! that's it, is it? Ah; well, I'll soon explain to you what it is to me. Do you ever do anything in this way, old fellow?" he added, striking him fairly to the ground. "I say, Meley, my girl, who is this snob?"

"Your card, sir, your card?" demanded Sir William. "I shall not make a blackguard of myself, but I insist upon having your card!"

"Don't trouble yourself, old fellow, to insist! I'll leave it exactly between the eyes;" and planting a tremendous blow in that precise spot, he added, "now you'll not forget the address."

"Who are you?" cried Sir William, bleeding profusely as he rose.

"Now where's your handkerchief? Don't spoil the carpet!"

"Who are you, sir?"

"Snooks!"

"I insist upon knowing who you are!"

"Timothy Snooks, Esquire, I tell you; number two and a half at the top of the monument. At home every day, except Sundays. Isn't that sufficiently explicit? But I say, old girl, where's Stanley?"

"I don't know, Albert dear; he knows, but he will not tell me."

"I say, old fellow, I'll bet you ten to one, that if Stanley were here you wouldn't have an eye to look out of! Where is he? I'll give you my card—at least I'll chalk my address upon the crown of your hat, and bet you fifty pounds to sixpence that I'll lick you to a mummy if you'll tell me now where Stanley is!"

"Your card, sir, is all that I require."

"Is that all?" said Albert, ringing the bell. "Well, let's have your hat. I should like to give you every possible chance, because you sport a respectable pair of moustachios. I say you, Jem," he added coolly, when the servant appeared, "send Bob up with this fellow's hat. But, Meley, what's the matter? You look very pale! Where the devil is Stanley?"

"I'd give the world to know," returned Amelia.

"Now then," said Albert as Bob entered, "have you got this fellow's hat?"

"I've got Sir William's hat, sir," replied Bob.

"Sir William's! what, this fellow's?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then get us a bit of chalk."

Bob, ever prepared to enter into the spirit of a scene of the kind, darted off for the chalk; and while Sir William was endeavouring to staunch the blood, which still streamed from his nostrils, Albert led Amelia from the room, and assured her that phlebotomy, as a means of subduing the passions, was the finest thing in life.

"Now then," said he on returning to the room, just as Bob re-appeared, "have you got that chalk, Bob?"

"No, sir; but here's a bit of whitening."

"That will do. Write my address upon the crown of that hat."

"Touch it," cried Sir William, "and I'll strike you to the earth!"

"I can do it, sir, very respectable!" said Bob as he commenced operations. "I went to the very first national school in nature."

Sir William rushed at him furiously, and in an instant Bob measured his length on the floor.

"Now I tell you what it is, Bob," said Albert, "if you don't thrash this fellow, I shall never have a decent opinion of you again."

"Oh, I'll have a turn with him," said Bob, "because he ain't no gentleman which strikes another gentleman unawares."

"Keep off!" cried Sir William. "It is you," he added, turning to Albert, "you, sir, with whom I have to deal."

"Oh, very well; let Bob and you decide this little affair, and then you and I can come to some settlement"

"Who are you, sir?"

"Snooks!"

"Who is this person?" cried Sir William, addressing Bob.

"Am I to tell, sir?"

"Of course."

"Mr. Albert, sir, misseses brother."

"Here is my card."

"Oh, if that's what you mean," said Albert, "here, old fellow, I'll accommodate you in any way; here you are—now then—here's mine. But I say, Bob, are you going to let him off so?"

"Why you see, sir, although I don't like to be hit for nothing, Sir William's a particular friend of master's, that's the



point. Had it been anybody else, I should have gone in regular, but it don't seem to agree with my digestion to strike a gentleman which master respects."

"Oh, very well; now, do you want anything else of me?"

"Sir," replied Sir William, "you shall hear from me again!"

"Well, let it be soon! But before you go, just let me explain to you, quietly, *Sir William*, that you are a most degraded coward, a most contemptible pultroon, a treacherous blackguard, and a consummate villain."

"That's sufficient," cried Sir William, as he left the room in haste.

"Well, I had an idea," rejoined Albert, "that it *would* be pretty nearly enough. I shall be here," he added, shouting at the top of the stairs—"I shall be here for the next three hours!"

Sir William heard him distinctly, but made no reply, and when he had left, Albert returned to Amelia, who explained to him in confidence all that had happened, and whom he did all in his power to soothe.

It had been the intention of Sir William to solicit the forgiveness of Amelia in the event of his being convinced of the impossibility of attaining his object, and to beg of her to keep the affair a secret, having, of course, no desire that it should reach Stanley's ears; but as he now felt that concealment was entirely out of the question—that the thing must, to Stanley, in its worst shape, be known,—he resolved to meet it boldly, and at once, and with so much promptitude did he act, that in less than an hour after having left the house a note arrived from Colonel Coleraine, in which he called upon Albert to refer him to a friend, with a view to settle the preliminaries of a meeting.

This somewhat puzzled Albert at first, for, at the moment, he knew not whom to refer to, feeling sure that General Johnson would not take upon himself the responsibility of allowing him to go out. At length, however, it occurred to him that Villiers, a Cambridge man, who had twice been a principal in an affair of the kind, was then in town: and to him he, therefore, at once referred Colonel Coleraine, and dispatched Bob with a letter, advising him of the fact of his having done so, and explaining the circumstances by which it had been induced.

Villiers undertook with alacrity to act on the part of Albert, and was soon after waited upon by Colonel Coleraine, when, as everything like an amicable arrangement of the matter was utterly out of the question, a meeting was appointed to take place that evening at Wormwood Scrubs.

Of this Albert was duly advised, and he prepared himself accordingly, but remained with Amelia—whom he, of course, kept in ignorance of the affair—until Villiers called for him in his cab, and drove him to the place appointed.

On their arrival they found Sir William already on the ground, and he certainly looked like a man who had been cruelly ill used. He and Albert, however, took no notice of each other, but paced the field with folded arms.

The seconds consulted. The weapons were examined, and prepared. The ground was measured, and the principals were placed.

"Now," said Villiers, "understand, when I drop this handkerchief, fire!"

Sir William took a cold-blooded aim: he was evidently bent upon mischief, while, as Albert stood, not a muscle moved: he was pale, indeed, and thoughtful, but firm as a rock.

"Are you ready?" cried Villiers. "Now!—One—two—three!"

The signal was given. Both at the same instant fired!—and the next, Sir William fell.

The surgeons—for two had been engaged—rushed at once to the aid of the falling man, and it was evident that the pain he endured was excruciating, for, as he writhed and rolled about the ground, he groaned dreadfully.

The wound was discovered promptly, and examined; and the result of that examination was, that the patella of the right knee was found to have been shot clean away, and that Sir William had thus been lamed for life.

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### IN WHICH AN OLD FRIEND RE-APPEARS.

STANLEY, who was, of course, quite unconscious of all this, and who had been throughout the day anxiously expecting Sir William—in the evening dispatched a messenger with the following note:—

"DEAR AMELIA,

"Why do you not either come or send to me? I am tortured with impatience. Wormwell, who has, of course, explained all, has not been near me the whole of the day. Send a note by the bearer. All will soon be well; but do not neglect

"Your own,

"STANLEY."

This note Amelia read again and again without being able to understand what it meant. Certainly Sir William had stated that he knew where Stanley was, but then he had endeavoured to induce the belief that he was in disreputable society, and yet Stanley himself evidently thought it strange that she had neither gone nor sent to him.

While dwelling upon these conflicting features of the mystery, and before she had had time to solve any one of them, Albert returned with a smile of triumph, and having kissed her with unusual warmth, for which she could not pretend to account—the note was placed into his hands.

"There has been," said he, having read it, "some treachery here."

"But where is he?"

"Oh, that we can soon ascertain from the fellow below. I'll inquire."

He did so: and on being informed, sent his card back by the messenger, and desired him to tell Stanley that he would immediately be with him.

"I see how it is," said he on returning to Amelia, "I see through it all. That scoundrel was sent by Stanley yesterday to tell you where he was."

"Is he safe?"

"Oh, he's *safe* enough! that's beyond *all* doubt. He never, I should say, was more safe in his life. He is at present residing in the house of a sheriff's officer."

Now it is a remarkable fact that on hearing this, Amelia exclaimed "Thank Heaven!" not precisely because the house in which he had been detained was that of a sheriff's officer—for under any other circumstances that would have been held to be a dreadful calamity—but because she had been led to apprehend that the house at which he had been staying was of a much worse character: so amazingly do all great troubles diminish when they come in lieu of those which we have been led to anticipate, and which are in our view greater. "But," she added, "I hope that it is not of much importance."

"Oh, no!" replied Albert, "he has been treating with contempt some indignant tailor, who conceiving himself to be an entire man, and therefore having the insolence to imagine that he ought to be attended to, has placed his bill in 'my solicitor's hands' as a matter of revenge, or something of that sort. However, I'll go to him, and then I shall hear all about it."

"Do, Albert, do, dear; and tell him that indeed I had no idea of where he was. But had I not better go with you?"

"No, no; you remain here and make yourself happy. He'd prefer it, I know."

"You will not be long, dear?"

"I'll not. I'll return as soon as possible."

He then started off, and on reaching the house threw Stanley into a state of the most intense astonishment, by relating to him all that had occurred. He concealed nothing from him—the design upon Amelia's honour, the falsehoods by which the miscreant sought to further that design, the thrashing he received, the duel and its result, were all minutely explained, while Stanley developed a greater variety of passions than were ever perhaps experienced within the same period by any one man.

His affection for Amelia was, however, in the ascendant. He felt then that he loved her more fondly than ever, and when the first burst of just indignation, inspired by the execrable baseness of Sir William had subsided, he smiled at the idea of *her* virtue being assailed, and marvelled that the villain should have been so great a fool as to attempt that which he might have been sure was impossible.

Having sufficiently dwelt upon this, he proceeded to explain to Albert why he was there, and this, of course, very naturally led to the consideration of the means by which his release might be obtained.

"Now I'll tell you what it is old fellow," said Albert, "I'd better go at once to the governor."

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Stanley. "I would not let him know of it for twenty times the amount."

"Well, what do you think then of the old General. *He* knows a trick or two, it strikes me. Shall I go and tell him?"

"No, that will not do; the rest would know of it immediately."

"Well, then, shall I go and explain it to your mother?"

"What could *she* do in the matter?"

"Well, who the devil shall I go and tell? I must go and tell somebody—somebody must know of it—something must be done!"

"Will you call upon this attorney?"

"I'll tell you what, old fellow; I'd dig, if I could, right clean through from us to our antipodes to serve you, but I will not call upon this artful varment, because I'd bet a million I should only make a mess of it, and thus do you more harm than good. What could I say to him?"

"You could ask him, at all events, what he means to do."

"So I can; but just look at the result. I go and I say to him, 'Now, old fellow, what do you mean to do in this business?' His answer will be, 'I mean to keep him in custody, of course, until the amount claimed be paid.' 'But it's a swindle.' 'I know nothing about that: I am employed to get the money,

and the money I must have.' 'But we'll bring it to trial.' 'You can't: you have already suffered judgment by default.' 'Then I'll tell you what it is, old fellow, we'll indict the whole gang for conspiracy.' His reply would be 'Do so; but let me strongly recommend you in the first place to find out the men.' I should never be able to get over such a fellow as that. You must send some venerable old swell, one who knows how to manage him. However, as nothing can be done in the matter to-night let us dream about it. Something will have suggested itself, doubtless, by the time I come down in the morning. You'll be at home when I call, I suppose?"

Stanley smiled.

"Well come, old fellow, give us a glass of wine, and I'll be off."

Stanley rang the bell, and in due time an attendant appeared.

"I say, old boy," said Albert, "give my love to Mrs. Moses —"

"Isaacs," said Stanley, "Isaacs."

"Oh, Isaacs is it? Well it's all the same. Give my love to Mrs. Isaacs, and tell her to send up a bottle of her most superb port; tell her to let it be *nishe*."

The attendant vanished, and when the wine had been produced, Albert took a couple of glasses, pronounced it to be very good of the sort, although the sort was rather queer; and having promised to be with Stanley very early in the morning, left with a strong recommendation which touched immediately upon the wisdom involved in the act of a man keeping up his spirits.

On his return to Amelia, Albert explained to her all that he imagined a woman ought, under the circumstances to know, and which singularly enough was very little: indeed, seeing that it will not take up much space here, it may as well be stated in full:—"Well, old girl—seen him—sends—his love and so on—right as a rook—happy—comfortable—slap rooms—wine—everything regular—soon be home—little mess—settled in no time. But," he added, "as I shall sleep here to-night let's you and I talk about business. In the first place we want some experienced old file just to take this little matter in hand. Question is, who can we get?"

"Why I should say," replied Amelia, "that papa would be the most proper person to apply to, and I am quite sure that no one would undertake the task with more pleasure."

"But Stanley won't have it. He wants it to be kept dark at home. Do you think now his mother knows any old boy?"

"I should say so."

"Does the old girl go to bed early?"

"Not very."

"Is she in bed now, think you?"

"Oh! no."

"Well, then, suppose we go and call upon her at once."

"Would Stanley approve of it?"

"Oh, we musn't be too squeamish. He has got himself into a mess, and we must now get him out of it. She may know some one who can do the trick at once. Go and put on your things, and I'll send for a coach. You can explain it to her, because you know all about it. I can put in a word or two, you know, here and there."

Although apprehensive that Stanley would be displeased when he heard of the step they were about to take, Amelia, believing that it ought to be taken, followed Albert's instructions with all possible dispatch, and they started.

Finding, on their arrival, that the Widow had not retired, they sent the servant up to announce them, with an intimation that they had just called to ascertain whether they might appear at that most unreasonable hour, without a scolding, or not.

Although this was done that the Widow might not be startled, she was startled, nevertheless.

"Gracious!" she exclaimed, as she met them at the drawing-room door. "What has happened? Is there anything the matter?"

"I knew that our appearance would surprise you," returned Amelia, "but for this you must scold Albert, not me. I have, however, to propose that we leave him here, while we have a little conversation in private."

"Oh, as you please," cried Albert. "You treat me just as you like, and being a patient animal I endure it."

The ladies then retired, and Amelia proceeded to relate what had occurred, with all possible calmness; but when the perfidy of Sir William had been duly explained, in addition to Stanley's arrest, the Widow became so bewildered, that she confessed, with great candour, that she really didn't know exactly whether she was at that particular period asleep or awake.

"Man, man!" she exclaimed. "Man, man! They are all alike—all! But I could not have believed it of him. He never attempted—he never hinted—he never appeared even to think of such a thing while with me! But then whom do you know?—whom *can* you know? Positively, no one! While I live, dear, I'll never put faith in man again! But what are we to do for poor Stanley? We must not allow him to remain where he is. What *can* be done? How are we to act?"

"Albert has something to propose," replied Amelia. "Perhaps, as you are now in possession of the facts, we had better return to him."

"By all means, my love. But who would have thought that Sir William, above all other men in the world, would prove himself to be such a monster? Well,—so much for man!"

"Albert," said Amelia, on their return to the drawing-room, "you have something to suggest."

"Why, yes," returned Albert. "You see," he added, addressing the widow, "I don't know how to manage this business myself, and as I won't make a mess of it, I won't interfere."

"Very correct," observed the widow; "extremely correct!"

"Now, I was thinking," pursued Albert, "that as Stanley objects to the interference of the Governor, you might know some artful, experienced, old, venerable-looking individual, who wouldn't mind taking the matter in hand. Do you know such a one?"

"Why—let me see," replied the widow, considering. "I do know a gentleman—a perfect man of business—"

"The very thing!—just the very fellow we want."

"But," continued the widow, "I don't see—really—how I can—now—with any degree of propriety—send to him."

"Does he know Stanley?"

"Oh, yes, perfectly. He has known him from childhood."

"Then *he'd* do it—oh, *he'd* do it! Shall I go and see him? What's his name?"

"Why—his name," replied the widow, "is Ripstone." And as she pronounced that name she slightly blushed.

"Ripstone; ah! well," said Albert, "I never heard of him; but where does he live? I'd better call upon him the first thing in the morning."

"Why—I'm thinking of its propriety!—And yet—I don't know—Stanley, it is true, might not like it."

"Oh, he'll not be very particular now. He wants to get out, and somebody must get him out, that's quite clear. Application ought, therefore, to be made to the best man. Do you think he would do it?"

"Oh, I'm sure he would, with pleasure."

"Well, then, why not apply to him at once?"

"Well—I don't know—perhaps it is very ridiculous for me to hesitate. I *think* that I might."

"Oh, yes!—do it at once. Let me call; or you send for him. Write a note now, and I'll take it myself."

"Do you think that I had better?"

"Decidedly! I'll take care that he has it early enough in the morning."

The widow, whose pulse was then more than a hundred, hesitated again: but at length, calling up all the courage at her command, she opened her desk, with the view of writing to Ripstone.

She had, however, scarcely dipped her pen in the ink, when she became impressed deeply with the difficulties which surrounded the task she proposed to perform. How could she address Mr. Ripstone? In her judgment "Sir" would be much too cold—"My dear Sir" somewhat too warm; and while "My dear Friend" would be warmer still, "Mrs. Thorn presents her compliments to Mr. Ripstone" would be, under the circumstances, out of character altogether.

Perceiving her embarrassment, although quite unconscious of the real cause, Albert, after waiting for some time, suggested that the better plan would be for him to call upon Mr. Ripstone, and to explain to him that she was anxious to have the benefit of his advice, and as this suggestion met the widow's views, for she found it impossible to get on with her pen, she gave Albert the address, with a variety of instructions, when he and Amelia left her, to collect those faculties of hers which had been so completely upset.

Early on the following morning, Albert waited upon Mr. Ripstone, and that gentleman received him with marked politeness, and assured him that Mrs. Thorn was a lady whom he highly esteemed, and that there was no soul on earth whom it would give him greater pleasure to serve.

"I suppose, Mr. Joliffe," he added, "it's something—something—"

"Yes, it is," replied Albert. "In fact, I may as well explain it all to you now."

"If you please," said Mr. Ripstone, who knew that it would save him a world of trouble, by rendering the creation of a host of conjectures unnecessary. "I should be glad if you would."

Albert did so: he explained, at least, all that had immediate reference to Stanley, and having finished that explanation, Mr. Ripstone accompanied him to the residence of the Widow.

It is in all probability unnecessary to state, that Mr. Ripstone was expected, and equally unnecessary is it, apparently, to explain that as he *was* expected, the widow was somewhat longer than usual at her toilet, and looked, when he arrived, as sweetly as possible. These were facts which all persons who appreciate the blessings of civilization will readily conceive, and as such is the case, it will be quite sufficient to state that fascination is a fool of a word to use, when the object is to convey a correct idea of the imposing effect of her general appearance.



"My dear madam," said Mr. Ripstone, as he entered, and approaching her he pressed her hand with all his wonted warmth. "I am happy, most happy, to see you looking so well."

The widow smiled, and bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment, which really at the time met the approbation of her own heart, but she felt notwithstanding very tremulous.

"It is some time," she observed in faltering accents, "since I last had the pleasure—"

"It is," said Mr. Ripstone, with considerate promptitude; "but we will not, my dear madam, dwell upon that. Mr. Joliffe has explained to me all that has reference to the matter upon which you would have my advice; and although I cannot sufficiently express to you how highly honoured I feel in having been thus applied to, I would submit, that the best advice I can offer, under the circumstances, is, that you will consent to leave the management of the whole affair to me."

"You are a kind, good creature," observed the widow, "I know not how to thank you."

"Then, my dear madam, don't attempt to do it. With your sanction, I will call upon Stanley at once. I have no doubt that the matter will soon be arranged: at all events, it shall be if I can arrange it."

"Of that I am sure, my dear friend, very sure; but I am quite ashamed to give you so much trouble."

"Believe me," rejoined Mr. Ripstone, "nothing ever gave me more real pleasure than this opportunity of serving one from whom I have experienced such high consideration."

The Widow blushed deeply, and felt extremely droll, and when Ripstone had explained that he should do himself the honour of calling, from time to time, in order to report progress, he again pressed her hand, and with an expression of profound respect, left her inspired with some of the oddest feelings that were ever experienced by a lady in either ancient or modern times.

On his arrival at the lock-up house Stanley was somewhat startled by his appearance, but when his object had been explained, and the character of his motives developed, he treated him with all possible courtesy, and conversed with him on the subject in the most friendly spirit; and that he really appreciated his kindness, was a fact which he did not attempt to conceal.

Having obtained from Stanley all the information he had the power to impart, Ripstone set to work, and by virtue of indefatigable zeal, he, with the aid of his solicitor, who was also one of his oldest and most esteemed friends, succeeded, in

three days from that time, in buying up the whole of the bills, and thus setting Stanley free!

From that auspicious period, Mr. Ripstone became a great favourite of Stanley's, and while Amelia held him in high respect, he was securely reinstated in the Widow's ardent heart. He dined with her constantly; indeed, scarcely a day passed on which she was not visited by Mr. Ripstone.

And thus things went on for a month, during which the Widow frequently felt—indeed she could not but feel—that he might as well come to the point at once; but although he had perfectly made up his mind, although he had again and again resolved to take, without any further delay, the contemplated step, he had never been able to screw his courage sufficiently up.

One evening, however,—this tiresome month having expired—when he and the Widow had been sitting for some time in silence, he gave a most resolute sigh.

"Well," thought the Widow, whose heart that sigh fluttered, "it's coming at last." She spoke not, however, nor, had she not felt it to be a duty incumbent upon her to echo that sigh as a matter of strict justice to herself, would she have broken the silence by which it was succeeded for worlds.

A pause ensued—a long, a painful, a most provoking pause—during which Ripstone zealously twirled his bunch of seals at the rate of three thousand turns per minute, while the Widow was apparently lost in admiration of the pattern of the lace with which her handkerchief was bordered.

At length Ripstone spoke, and as he did so, the Widow's susceptible heart put on the steam, and its action, was in consequence, indicative of the highest possible pressure.

"I recollect, my dear madam," said he, "that when I was comparatively poor,"—and here it will be highly correct to state, that since that period an extremely ancient uncle of his had departed this life and left him the whole of his wealth—"I recollect that a certain lady whom I held, and still hold in high esteem, on one occasion solicited my advice on a certain—delicate—subject."

"I see, I see," thought the Widow, "I see." And she prayed that Ripstone might not break down.

"Now," pursued Mr. Ripstone, deliberately weighing every word, and dwelling upon its import and probable effect. "Now, as that lady—that is to say as the question—I mean the subject—or rather the advice which that lady solicited was somewhat—at least she considered it to be somewhat—delicate, do you think—I merely put it to you, whether you think—that I could, without any impropriety, solicit the advice of that lady on a subject, perhaps, equally delicate!"

The Widow looked archly, and smiled, conceiving that her playfulness might inspire him with a *little* more courage; but Ripstone whose countenance then was as rigidly solemn as before, added, "What do you *think*?"

"Why," replied the Widow, "the question is one which appears to be surrounded by difficulties; still I do seriously think that you might!"

"Well now, do you know, the same thing has struck me two or three times, of late, and as your views and mine upon that point coincide, I think I will!"

"Oh, I would by all means! There cannot be any impropriety in it."

"Then, of course, you understand—I mean, you guess—the subject upon which——"

"Nay, how is that possible?"

The expressive countenance of Mr. Ripstone was screwed into one of the most fascinating smiles ever beheld, as he observed in winning accents; "It strikes me you do."

"How is it—how can it be possible? You have not explained."

"Do you really require any additional explanation?"

"What a very droll creature you are;" observed the Widow; and as she made that remarkable observation, she smiled with so much sweetness, and looked with so much archness, while her brilliant eyes beaming in liquid delight, shone with such sparkling lustre, that she absolutely dazzled Ripstone's faculties to an extent which rendered them perfectly chaotic. "When," she added, conceiving it to be highly inexpedient to suffer any moral confusion to induce irresolution and consequent delay, "when I ventured to express an opinion that there could not be any impropriety in adopting the course you propose I did so in the perfect conviction that you could propose to adopt no course in which there *was* the slightest impropriety."

"You are polite enough to say so," observed Mr. Ripstone, who felt a little better; "but I nevertheless do want a little advice."

"What *do* you mean, you funny man?"

"I'll tell you," cried Ripstone with desperate nerve, for he felt that unless it were forced out, it would not come out at all—"I'll tell you at once: I want to marry: I want to marry a lady—a certain lady. Very well. Now I want to know how I'm to go to work."

"Well—it may appear presumptuous in me, certainly—but I think that I might give you a little advice upon that point! Do I know the lady?"

"Oh, yes," replied Ripstone, chuckling at the idea of that state of astonishment into which he conceived the widow was about to be thrown, "you know her perfectly! no one, in fact, can pretend to know her better than you."

"Oh, well, then the difficulty will not be great. Has she any idea of your intentions?"

"I think she has," replied Ripstone, smiling with singular significance, "I think so: at all events it strikes me she has."

"Well then, all you have to do is—but you know much better than I *can*!"

"No, no: upon my honour: I have had no experience in that matter: you have."

"Well, I can only say what I should do if I were in your situation."

"Exactly: yes—that's the very point."

"Well, I'd go to her and say at once something to this effect: 'I have been thinking that marriage, being a state from which springs every species of social felicity—is one into which those, by whom social felicity is appreciated, ought to enter: I have also been thinking that—as you and I have known each other long enough to know that our views and feelings upon every point of importance coincide—if *we* were to marry our happiness would be increased; so certain am I that, even taking but a common-sense view of the matter, we should be one of the most comfortable couples in existence.'"

"Well, my dear madam?—and then?"

"Why then you would have but to say, 'What do *you* think?' or in order to bring the thing at once to the point, 'In a word, will you have me?'"

"Very good—and then her answer?"

"Oh, I cannot tell what that would be."

"Can you not tell what *your* answer would be?"

"Mine!—Under the same circumstances?"

"Precisely. Conceive that all you advised me to say to her I have said to you; for you are the lady!—the only one on earth whom I would thus address. Now, what would be your answer? Nay what *is* your answer? Will you have me?"

The Widow blushed—that she felt herself bound to do of course—and was silent; but Ripstone, as she prudently fixed her eyes upon the carpet, seized her unresisting hand, and having kissed it very correctly—pressed it to his heart, exclaiming, "Yes!—I will answer for you—Yes!—You will be mine."

"You are a kind, good creature," said the Widow, having sufficiently paused, "one whom I would not for the world deceive."

"Of that I am convinced :—I know that you would not !"

"My dear good friend, I feel it to be my duty then to state to you, that in a pecuniary point of view, I am unfortunately not in the same position as that in which I once stood."

"I know it :—I know in fact more on that subject than you imagine ; but what of that ? I have sufficient ; much more than sufficient to enable us to live in the style to which you have been accustomed : therefore let us not say another word about that. There is, by the by, in connexion with this subject, one favour I have to ask, in fact one stipulation I have to make ; it is this, that the whole of the property you now possess, be settled at once upon Stanley."

"Kind, generous, good soul !" exclaimed the Widow.

"Then to this you consent ?"

"With feelings of mingled gratitude and esteem to which I cannot give expression," replied the Widow, and the tears sprang from her eyes, as she reflected upon Ripstone's consideration for Stanley—"I do."

The compact was then, in the usual manner, sealed—indeed, they sealed it in the usual manner many times in the course of that truly happy evening—and so fully did they enter into each other's views, and so perfect was the understanding which existed between them, that within a week—everything having been arranged to the entire satisfaction of all concerned, including Stanley—they stood at the altar, and with feelings of joy—in the cheering presence of their most highly valued friends—were united.

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## CHAPTER XLIX.

### BRINGS THIS HISTORY TO A CLOSE.

By virtue of a little finessing on the part of Mr. Ripstone, who privately assigned more stock than his lady at the period of their marriage possessed, Stanley's income was raised to a thousand a year ; and having by this time purchased sufficient experience not only to guard him against the designs of dashing knaves, but to inspire him with an utter contempt for those fashionable follies, in which there is neither manliness, justice, nor reason, he resolved to enjoy those substantial delights of which honour and love are the germs.

Had he previously to his marriage seen more of what is

denominated "life;" had he entered into the senseless frivolities of that "life"—for which the appetite soon palls and which, in reflecting minds, soon create disgust—before he undertook the duties of a husband, his heart, which was of a manly generous caste, would never have permitted him to treat with neglect one so amiable, so gentle, as Amelia. He now, however, saw that that neglect—although it proceeded in his case solely from thoughtlessness and irresolution—was unmanly, if not indeed brutal; and having proved what a god a man is in the judgment of a patient affectionate wife, he became one of the most attentive and considerate husbands that ever charmed a gentle spirit with joy. Then, indeed, did Amelia deem herself blessed. His whole soul seemed centered in her. He appreciated fully her innumerable virtues, and that appreciation alone was the source of pure happiness to both.

Sir William he never again met by any accident: indeed, since his affair with Albert, the old associates of that honourable person had spurned him; not in consequence of that affair, nor of the villany which induced it; but because, a dissolution of Parliament having occurred at that period, he lost his seat to which he was not re-elected, when his creditors pounced upon and forced him into the Bench, within the Rules of which he lived and died, rather than give up the miserable wreck of his fortune.

Nor did Stanley ever again meet with "Captain" Filcher; but a circumstance occurred about twelve months after the bills became due, which put him in possession of certain facts having reference to that gallant gentleman, and which it will be therefore correct to explain.

Passing on that occasion with Stanley through Burlington Arcade, Amelia stopped at one of the windows to admire a box of extremely delicate French gloves, and, being desirous of making a purchase, she entered the shop, which was well-stocked and fitted up with infinite taste. The very moment, however, she had entered with Stanley, the young person in attendance sighed deeply and almost fainted.

"My precious!" exclaimed a more elderly person, rushing forward at the moment, "My precious!" and turning round she almost fainted too, as Stanley recognised in them the "Countess" and her mamma.

Of course Amelia thought this rather strange, and looked somewhat seriously at Stanley.

"Do you know these persons?" she inquired.

Stanley, who had previously related the whole of the circumstances, privately explained who they were, when turning to

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Mrs. Gills, he observed that he was happy to see them in a position of so much comfort.

"Oh, Mr. Thorn!" cried that lady: "my poor deluded daughter!" she added, as the tears gushed from her eyes. "You know, sir, how she was deluded."

"I do," replied Stanley; "but I hope that she is now more happy."

"It was not wickedness on her part. That is the only consolation I have. I know, sir, how you were deceived too by that second monster."

"What has become of him? where is he now?"

"He has his reward, sir: oh, yes! he has his reward. But if you and your lady would condescend to step this way, sir, I shall be happy to explain all."

Being anxious to know something about the scoundrel, Stanley at once accepted the invitation, and he and Amelia were led into a neat little room immediately over the shop, when Mrs. Gills, with due eloquence and spirit, related all that had occurred since the elopement; of which the substance was, that on her arrival at Calais, Filcher explained to the "Countess" the real nature of her social position—that he promised to marry her himself—that he never performed that promise—that in three months from the time it was made, he deserted her, and that in less than a month after that he was duly apprehended for swindling, and as a conviction followed, he had been in a French prison ever since: that on the return of the Countess to England, an application was made to the Earl; that in consequence of that application having been treated with contempt, an *exposé* was threatened, and that eventually, in order to avoid that, he consented to pay a certain sum down to enable her to get into business, and to allow her an annuity of fifty pounds for life.

Amelia having listened with the utmost attention to the relation of these circumstances, which occupied nearly two hours, felt an amiable interest in the welfare of the "Countess," and promised to do all in her power to promote it. This promise she faithfully kept, as well by direct patronage as by recommendation, and in order to give an earnest of her intention, she purchased that morning to the amount of twenty pounds.

It appeared, however, that during the whole of their difficulties, Mrs. Gills and her daughter had one firm friend, and that friend was Mr. Joseph Coggles; and as it may be in all probability remembered that during the progress of this history, that venerable gentleman—"Venerable Joe"—has been alluded to before, it will not perhaps, to some, be uninteresting

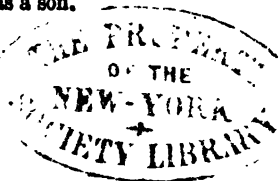
to state that he faithfully married the gentle Joanna—that she wore what he termed the “oh-no-we-never-mentionables” strictly—that she naturally considered them to be an excellent fit, and very comfortable things too she found them—that he went to smoke his pipe every evening at the sign of the “Cat and Constitution”—a house kept by his valued friend Bob, to whom Stanley lent nominally, but actually gave, a sufficient sum of money to take it; and that the venerable gentleman was the oracle of the parlour, the frequenters of which were at all times delighted with his profoundly philosophical dissertations.

And as to Bob! Bob was a great man! For independently of the profits which the retail business of the Cat and Constitution daily yielded, he derived an immense emolument from the fact of his being Stanley’s “right hand,” his Master of the Horse, and Purveyor General of Wines and Spirits, not only to him, but to the whole of his family and connections.

For some considerable time, however, after this, Bob remained single, for having made up his mind not to marry until he met with the counterpart of Amelia, whom he had always much admired, he could not so soon, as many might have expected, see one in his sphere possessing those points of resemblance which he deemed essential; but as at length, a favourite niece of his venerable friend arrived in town, a mild, quiet, amiable girl, one indeed who met his views to a shade, the consequence was that they soon became enamoured of each other, and having married, they were exceedingly affectionate and happy, and had in due time a very fair family of children.

But in the height of his prosperity, and he certainly was very prosperous, Bob never ceased to look upon Stanley as the best friend he had. There was nothing a man could do that Bob would not with pleasure have done to serve him. Indeed Stanley was an universal favourite. The General prided himself upon having laid the first stone of that which he cautiously termed his reformation, and while the Captain, in common with the whole of his friends, highly admired his character, it scarcely need be added that Amelia was proud of him as a husband, and that the *ci-devant* Widow, who had settled down with Ripstone to the tranquil enjoyment of life, was beyond all conception proud of him as a son.

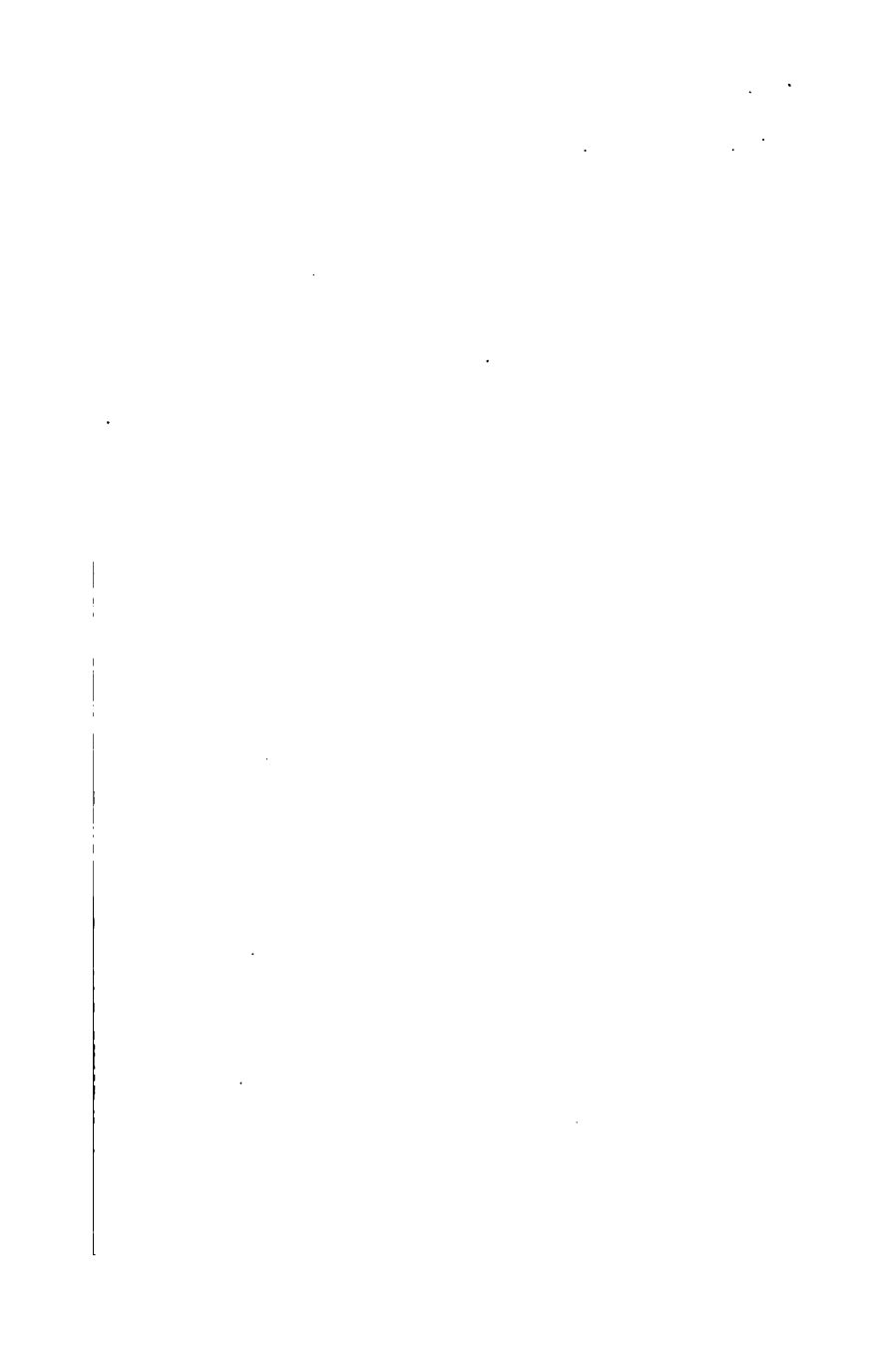
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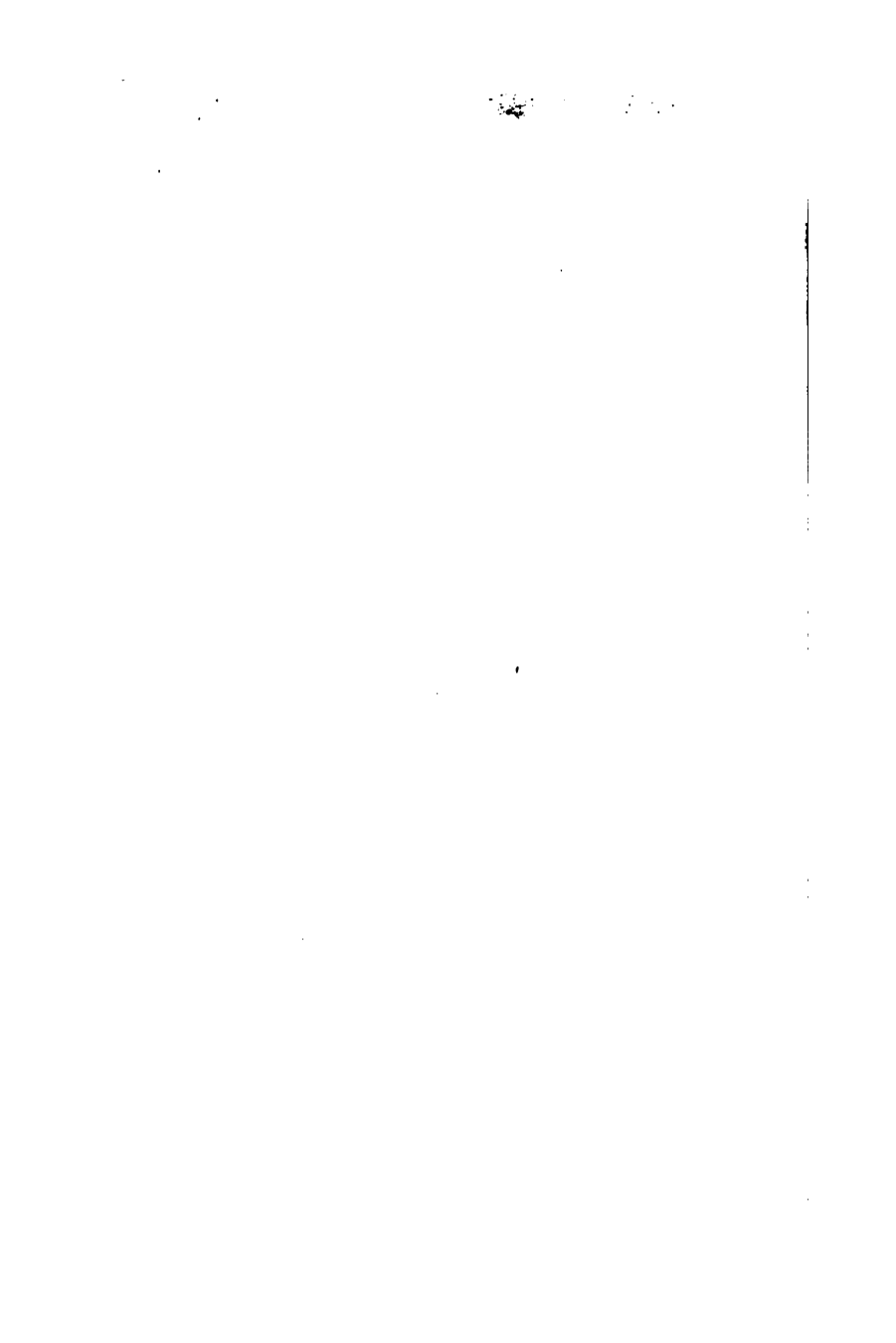
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